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BENDISH

A STUDY IN PRODIGALITY

BENDISH
NO
A STUDY IN PRODIGALITY

BY
MAURICE HEWLETT

"Alieni profusus, sui appetens"

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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BENDISH

A STUDY IN PRODIGALITY

BENDISH

CHAPTER I

FATE AND MR. HENIKER

ON a misty Tuesday morning in the autumn of that year which saw William the Fourth King of England, a broad-shouldered young man of pleasant though fiery aspect, blundered late into the Mill Hill stage at Holborn Bars and trod upon the toes of a young lady, its only passenger. She shuddered, and he apologised as he tumbled into the corner opposite. The coach was already lurching over the slippery stones when this event occurred. It had reached Lamb's Conduit Street before the young man had swum from the waves of agitation into the smooth waters of consciousness: in simpler words, it had taken him ten minutes or more to be done with fanning himself with his hat, flapping the wings of his great coat, steadying and unsteadying his little black bag, puffing and blowing, appealing for witness to the roof of the stage-carriage, and then to have observed how pretty a lady he had put to pain and annoyance. Whether it was her charm which compunged him, or the comparative calm into which

he had now brought himself, is not to be known. It is certain that he leaned forward, hat in hand, and said, "Ten thousand pardons, Madame, for my abominable clumsiness!" In the act he showed a head of Heëlios, a head which looked as if it had been dipped in sunset: but his eyes were very blue, and he had a pleasant, gentleman's face.

The young lady bowed her head, and a becoming blush mantled her fair cheeks. For one moment her serious gaze lit upon him; it appeared to him that her eyes dilated and swam all about him, that he drowned. "Pray do not think of it, sir," she said. "I am glad that you were no later."

His face lit up, his own blue eyes flashed. He smiled; his teeth were good and very white. "You cannot be more glad than I am, I assure you," he said: a promising beginning. But the lady's reserve resumed its hold upon her. No more was to be permitted. She gazed upon her gloved and folded hands, she was pensive, but not standing-off. She showed no fear of possible advances, but rather assumed that, as a matter of course, there could be none; and soon she became so engrossed in her own thoughts as to be positively unaware of Mr. Heniker—for Roger Heniker was our young man. Not even a disorderly crowd near Pancras Church, a crowd of hoarse and inflamed persons with tattered flag and braying horn surrounding an orator in a cart, was able to disturb her reclusion. This mob came flooding about the coach; one heard harsh cries thrown up. "Reform, Reform!" "Give us

the Bill!" "To Hell with the Duke!" "Grey for ever!" She raised her arching eyebrows, she glanced out of window, and drew back from a beery grin. "God bless you, miss, we won't hurt you. It's the Bill we want—" These were parlous times, remember; rick-burning in the country and bill-clamouring in town.

"The lady hasn't got it—nor have I," said Mr. Heniker. "Off with you, my man." He spoke pleasantly, and was so received. The coach lunged forward, and his little bag rolled on to the floor. When he had bestowed it upon his knee again he found himself no better able to carry on conversation.

This young lady, whose face was pure oval and divinely coloured, whose eyes were grey, and whose lips were sweetly bunched together for seriousness, looked what she was, the thrifty owner of charms too rare for vulgar husbandry. By instinct, you would have said, she knew her worth. She was lovely in form and colour, neatly and even severely dressed, without a trace of coquetry. There was a quaker tinge upon her; a dovelike habit. One could not consider her and allure together. She was like a bird, but did not trail a wing. Mr. Heniker found himself recalling scraps of the psalter as he was swayed along the Camden Road: "My darling from the lions," and similar phrases. She inspired pious thoughts; one was the better for having been in her company. He did not like to think of the straw which her feet had touched being hereafter trampled by drovers' boots or spat upon by bagmen. Profana-

tion! It seemed to him that the coach should be solemnly burned at the end of the journey, with a clergyman to read the committal of it to the flames, and possibly a quire of virgins in white ready with a hymn in the background. The Annunciation came into his mind, and then Susannah and the Elders. But though he was observing her closely at the time, and she must needs (you would say) have been aware of it, it did not occur to him that the coach was empty but for himself and her, and that the guard, swaying by the boot, could hardly view more than the point of her knee. You see he was very conscious of the elevation of his thoughts. If she was 'Susannah, the world at large, through which she went in hourly peril, stood for the libidinous old couple.

They were now in the country, rolling between drip-spangled hedgerows, the guardians of fog and dim grass, ghostly elms and shrouded cattle. Here and there a newish villa stood glimmering white in the haze; here and there a warm brick wall half hid a pedimented, more considerable house. They were in North Middlesex, having topped the ridge of Hampstead, and near their journey's end. The coach pulled up in a straggling village between a duck-pond fenced by white palings and the porch of a weather-boarded inn. The guard opened the door, and the young lady slipped quickly out.

"Bunch of Feathers, sir," he told Heniker. "Golder's Green." The young man had no moment

to reflect upon the vanishing of his charmer, nor upon the blissful fact that the same village was to hold him near her for an hour.

"Hulloa! I get down here," he said, and tumbled out, with a shilling for the man.

He stood confused upon the gravel. "Now—Myrtle Cottage—Mrs. Welbore—how do I—?" He addressed the foggy air, but a loafer by the porch coughed and spat.

"Down the street, sir, to the church; up Church Lane, and you'll find it opposite Mr. Jaskins' farmhouse. A matter of ten minutes—and I'll be thankful for the price of a half-pint."

Heniker bestowed his alms and hastened after the retreating form of the lady which he could just see about to be swallowed up in fog. He saw his way to a question and answer, and almost certainly to another look from her fine grey eyes. She was actually now turning up by the churchyard into a lane which, with fortune to help, must needs be his. Long legs served him well; he drew level with her before she was past the church.

Assuredly she had been aware of pursuit; there had been a gleam of the ear and cheek, a flying set of the shoulder; she had seemed to be before the wind, to have been leaving a wake. But extreme caution, not alarm, made her eyes so bright; and the vivid rose of her cheek may well have been the flush of her speed.

Heniker drew level, and she tired. The game was up; she was his; her eyes met his in appeal.

Youth, his length of limb, the lonely lane, the fog, were all pleading in her soft glance. The red and naked sun at this moment loomed low in the mist like a flat disk of copper, but showed her glowing like a morning sky. From that beating moment he was at her feet.

His hat was in his hand; he was very red.

"I intrude upon you again, Madam," he said; "this time for a kindness. I'm a stranger in these parts, and am trying to find Myrtle Cottage. Could you perhaps direct me?"

He was sure afterwards that it was Fate, and was pleased with the notion; but just at the moment other things involved him: her swift comprehension of him and his question together, as if the one set the other in a new light; a new gleam in her fine eyes; her loss, for the minute, of suspicion. She was thrown off her guard, and became a fellow-creature, not a hunted thing.

"Oh, yes, indeed," she said. "I can show you the house. I live there."

This was much too serious for his stock of small talk. "You live there!" he cried out. "How extraordinary!"

Her simple "Why is it extraordinary?" knocked him flat.

"I beg your pardon; it is not in the least extraordinary, of course. But you'll allow that it's odd we should have travelled from town together, and should be going to the same house in Golder's Green."

But she did not seem ready to admit even a coincidence between them; so he ran on in a hurry:

"I ought to tell you, perhaps, that I had been hoping to see a friend of mine there—a Mr. Bendish. He is staying at Myrtle Cottage—at least I think so—the guest of Mrs. Welbore. Is it possible that *you* are—?"

She could meet him here, speaking with decision.

"Mrs. Welbore is my aunt," she said. "I live with her. And you will find your friend there too. He is not her guest, but her lodger. We are quite poor people."

He murmured something—anything—and turned the conversation.

"Mr. Bendish is younger than I am, but a great, a good friend—" He tried hard to be easy and relevant. "We've known each other all our lives. We were at school together. And since then— Oh, well, we've had a good deal of business, you must understand."

There he stopped, partly because he was in difficulties, partly because he felt that she was not interested. He hoped ardently that she was not, at any rate. For he pictured his friend Bendish very clearly, with his calm, imperial look, appraising this heavenly creature, arrogating her to himself by *droit de seigneur*. His good honest heart was like lead within him.

They walked on without more words for some little way; but she broke the silence with some deprecation of the forlorn look of things—sodden

fields, flattened layers of leaves, dripping trees. He agreed, but insisted that the town was worse. It had rained, he said, for a week. Last Friday, for instance—, and she laughed agreement.

“Last Friday,” she said, “I was soaked—literally soaked, and had to come home as I was. And the Tuesday before that—to-day week—”

He looked at her quickly. “Oh, you are often in town, then?”

She nodded her bright head. “Yes, twice a week. I teach drawing to a young lady in Bloomsbury Square on Tuesdays and Fridays. We are not very well-to-do, you see. I am glad to earn what I can.”

He was concerned. “It is very courageous of you, I think.” He saw her blush; but at that moment they stood before Myrtle Cottage—so proclaimed on the white wicket gate which opened to a flagged way and a door within a porch of trellis. A modest building enough, to contain the imperial Bendish. Heniker smiled awry to think of it—to picture his arrogating friend and this maidenly beauty, so to speak, under his covering hand, held down during pleasure as a boy holds a mouse or little bird.

Mrs. Welbore’s niece knocked briskly, and was quickly answered. The round-eyed maid stared like a foolish kitten to see the tall and red-headed stranger. “Oh, Susan,” said she, “do you know if Mr. Bendish is in?”

Susan gasped her “Oh, yes, Miss Rose.” Miss

Rose! Ah, beautifully named, most gentle lady! She turned her last to Heniker.

"Your friend is here. The maid will announce you at once. Susan," she said, "please take this gentleman to Mr. Bendish." She looked shyly at him, gravely smiling with eyes and sober lips, bowed her head, and passed quickly into the house and up the stair. Heniker gazed after her.

"What name, if you please, sir?" says Susan, and recovered him for this world of chance and change.

"Eh? Oh, of course. Say Mr. Roger Heniker, if you please."

She knocked at the door immediately on the left. The occupant roared his "Come in," and she opened. Blue clouds streamed outwards and hid her up. Then he heard his welcome.

"Roger, by Heaven! Come in, Roger, and be d——d to you." Heniker plunged into the blue mist of Latakia, little bag in hand.

CHAPTER II

IDYLL IN A MASK

THE room reeked tobacco and was shrouded in it. The fire was muffled; the window stared up like a white sheet; the table was a menace, the chairs were snares. It was some time before any human tenant could be seen, but a pale dim outline was presently discovered—a recumbent form upon a sofa, swathed in white robes. His knees made a pyramid, a kind of sugar-loaf mountain; their top in strong light was like a snow-cap. The mountain appeared volcanic; for the blue wreaths shot up from it, and broke and hung, while a fierce bubbling and gurgling heralded each outburst.

But Heniker advanced, nothing doubting. "I hope that 'Mr.' Bendish keeps his health," he said, with jocular emphasis upon the title. "I see that he has his hubble-bubble in order."

A marble-faced young man with a dark head of curly hair and intensely dark eyes lay absorbed upon the sofa. Every feature of him was as sharp and still as statuary; if he assumed rapture in his work, he assumed it well. Enveloped in a white Turkish gown, he was writing, with his knees for desk. Open books were strewn about him; he blew and sucked at a water-pipe which stood in visible commotion

upon the floor beside him. He was very handsome, and sublimely uninterested in his visitor, although at the same time acutely aware of him. Heniker stood, half amused, half impatient, while he finished a phrase, scratched out a word, put in another, then stabbed in a full stop. Heniker watched him as if he knew that all this was acting, and excellent of its kind.

At the period he said drily, "Got him, George?" The young man lifted his fine eyebrows.

"Who knows? It seems good to me. Do you care for Homer, by the way?"

Heniker laughed, being of the kind that considers poetry a weakness.

"Homer!" he said. "I haven't thought about him since I left school. What are you at, George? Homer?"

"The Iliad," said his friend. "By God, it's superb. I may be wrong, but I think I've done it this time. I've been at it now for a fortnight. I read the thing right through—once—in a week. Finished it yesterday. This morning I began this. It's moving, you know, it's moving."

Heniker sat down plumbly on the end of the sofa. "What is moving? Homer? Or you? You are translating him—like Pope? Or is Mr. Cowper your model?"

Mr. Bendish was looking at his sheets. "You shall judge," he said. "You shall judge. I'll give you a bit in the middle of the first book. Do you remember Agamemnon and Achilles?"

Heniker nodded. "I have heard of both of them. 'Eurukreiōn Agamemnon—Podasokūs Achilleus.' Go on, George."

Mr. Bendish was occupied with his manuscript, entreating it lovingly, with a dot to an i, a cross to a t. "You remember the quarrel? They pitch into each other! It is all splendid, of course; but the climax comes after Athené has heartened Achilles. She goes, and he breaks out—'Oinobarés, kunos om-mat' echōn, kradiēn d'elaphoio'—Oh, you must remember that. Now here am I:—"

He began to read, with fierce emphasis upon the consonants—finely and savagely—

Drunken and dog-faced, hearted like a deer!
Who never yet didst dare arm for the war
Among thy people, nor lay ambushade
With chiefs of Hellas—that were death to thee!
Thy chosen way, to range the far-spread host,
Snatching the store of him who counters thee—
Eater of men! . . .

There he stopped with a half laugh, and let the pages fall as they would. Not that he thought the work bad—far from that; but that he felt sure that it did not seem superb to his companion.

"That's the kind of thing," he said lightly. "My 'elegant leisure!' But these things don't amuse you."

"Some of them," Heniker said, "amuse me extremely; yourself, if I may say so, chiefly and always. Let me ask you now how long this masquerade is to

go on? It is getting awkward for us. My father is disturbed, and begins to talk about *noblesse oblige*. Your mother, I may tell you, has been writing about that every day for a month. She writes a good deal when you are with her, but nothing to this."

The young man in white sucked at his pipe, staring straight before him. He would have been much more handsome if he had not known with every breath that he took exactly how handsome he was.

"You don't care for my Iliad? You find it like Cowper's? H'm."

Heniker frowned. "My dear George, if it will make you serious, or attentive, I'll tell you at once that I don't give a snap of the forefinger for Homer—yours or his own. I've got your business on my hands, and ticklish enough some of it is. You forget that your friend's—an attorney-at-law."

Bendish gazed at him calmly. "I do my best, Roger, as you see."

Heniker straightened himself. "I'm not at all obliged to you. I wish, indeed, that you would remember it." Then he opened his black bag. "I've got a dozen things for you to look at." He dived for papers, fished up one. "Here's Milsom's mortgage—he writes of foreclosure. We'll have to do something with Faintways." He fished again: "Shadrach won't renew except at a monstrous figure. Oh, and here are the Newbiggin accounts. Two of the best are behindhand: they plead bad times. And there are assignments for you to sign, and a deputation or two. I'll get you to affirm those, George."

Mr. Bendish reached out for these documents. "I'll sign anything you please," he said, spread out the parchments, dipped his quill, and wrote in a black upright hand, in very large and even lettering—Bendish. Roger Heniker watched him, twinkling with amusement.

"You write a fine frank to a letter, George. You shall give me some before I go. Now, let me ask you—do these ladies here know that they are entertaining a lord?"

Lord Bendish looked at him as if such a question had never occurred to his mind. "Upon my soul, I don't know. I don't see why they should not have taken my word for it. I gave them to understand that I was a—just an ordinary person."

"You might be both, you know," said Heniker. Lord Bendish flinched, and replied to this mild pleasantry with quite unnecessary seriousness and heat.

"I am much obliged to you. Doubtless I am, but in neither case is the fault my own. However—I did *not* mention my rank to Mrs. Welbore—nor shall I—nor shall you, by your leave—or by mine." He stopped there as if out of conceit with his own vehemence. A new train of thought took him. Presently he said, "Of course they may have been looking at one's things—brushes, bottles, gimcrackery of that kind. I can't help that—but they are simple, good souls, not prone to prying; and I doubt it."

Heniker, prick-eared for any patronage of the clear-eyed young goddess of the house, said nothing more

of his friend's masquerade, but turned to affairs, and contrived to get himself heard upon urgent business. With this I do not concern the reader beyond saying that this young lord's money-matters were not in good trim and could have been in no trim at all if the Henikers, father and son, had not been both honest and capable. That they were so will appear in the course of this book; that their noble client was difficult, at one time exceedingly shrewd and keen upon his profit, at another vexed beyond endurance at the very word Business, must also appear if I am to do any justice to the fluxes of his mood. At this time he lent an occasional, and very unwilling ear to his friend. The distaste which he showed for finance was grounded upon idealism and expressed with rhetoric. He wanted no money; his needs were but one. "Peace, my dear Roger, leisure of mind is what I need. I came here to get them. For what other reason do you suppose I jumped out of town, cut the clubs, the silly clatter and candlelight of the Opera, the undressed women and unsexed men of Society? For what other reason did I drop my lordship, leave my coronet on the flags of St. James's Street—but to be quiet? I have talent—I know it. I will be heard of one of these days—but not as a learned peer, not as a young lord with elegant accomplishments. No, no, my good friend, I won't get up Parnassus in a state-coach, nor take my seat before Apollo with a herald to cry out my titles, or produce my writ of summons. And it will take more than Lady O—or Lady J—to get

me there, let me remind you. Work, sir, work! Brain-work will do it for me. Bah, my good fellow, what was I doing with all those people—blacklegs, blackguards, rips, demireps? And that other lot—the Halcro set, the Melmerby set, the Louvers, Lady O——, Lady J——; all those damned pretty women, as false as they are frail! Suddenly I sickened. Stomach, do you say? Liver? Not at all. Heart, sir. I discovered that I had a conscience. I said, ‘You infernal ass, Bendish. Here you are with a head hard enough to break the Tables of Stone, and you turn it into a footstool for strumpets.’ I said I’d none of it, and I left it all. It’s all there still, I doubt not. The pasteboard, the bills, the *billets-doux*, tumbling in at the slit in the door. Let ’em lie for me. I have Homer—and something else which I’ll show you if you’re worthy of it. A thing which—I don’t know—which may perhaps—not all die. How can I tell? I’m very young, you know, but—” Here he touched his breast—“I feel it in me.”

To all of this, and to a good deal more of the sort, Roger Heniker listened, as he needs must, well knowing that for this expensive escapade also the money must be found. Such listening was of his profession. Before it was well over he saw that his lordship must be humoured for the present—the more so as his lordship, with a good deal of the mule in him too, positively declined to budge. His mother! Let the Heniker pair deal with his mother. True, she didn’t like it, but then she didn’t like anything. She never

had. If he stayed at home, she took it ill; if he went away, she took it ill; but if he was at home she quarrelled *vivâ voce*, and when he was away she took to the twopenny post. He, Bendish, infinitely preferred the latter, because he had no need to read her letters. He answered them—yes; but he did not read them.

One beat remained, and Heniker tried it. Bendish had been moved by it more than twice before; it touched him in a tender place. That was his peerage. He had succeeded to it unexpectedly and late enough in life to have been permanently impressed by it. Heniker had been present when the accolade fell, as it were, from Heaven upon his boyish back, and had been very much impressed, boy as he too had been at the time. So now he urged his peerage upon him. Bendish was of age—would he not take his seat?

But Lord Bendish shook his handsome head. Not yet, he said—not yet. He had something to do first—something definite—something (possibly) decisive. Let that be done first, at any rate. Decidedly, no seat-taking yet awhile.

But, said Heniker—and it was his last throw—here we were hard upon the year of a coronation. There would be a Court of Claims, to sit almost at once. Was it not Bendish's duty to consider the reasonable expectation of his successors? Was the Bendish privilege to sink for want of user? The pale face certainly glowed for answer, the proud small head certainly stiffened at that. But Lord Bendish

did not commit himself. We would see—there was time enough. Then he stretched, yawned, and looked over his shoulder at the mantelpiece. “By the Lord, half-past five! And I dine at seven, and haven’t dressed yet. I don’t rise, you know, Roger, till two in the afternoon—you’ll excuse me. By the way, stay and dine with me. You must—I’ll not be denied. And after dinner I’ll get leave to show you one of the prettiest, gentlest, pleasant-spoken, modest girls you ever clapped eyes upon. It’s a fact; she’s like a nymph of Athené’s. She’s my landlady’s niece, and born as much a lady as you please. What!” he broke off here, impatient to be stopped—for Heniker had looked down at his boots—“Pooh, man, what will they care about your boots? We’re not going to Almack’s. I tell you they are simple, honest people—not bandbox fine women. Besides—Oh, leave all that to me! I’ll explain you and your boots in a breath. I advise you to stay—in fact you must, if only to be conquered. You’ll fall in love with her, it’s a thousand to one. I did immediately. But you’ll be too late, Roger, for I believe she has a kindness for your poor servant. Now I’m off to my bath. They know me here. Amuse yourself well—turn over my *Iliad*. I declare some of it is tolerable. But the other thing—ah, I’ll talk to you about that. That will make your hair stand on end.” He went off whistling to his toilette, leaving Mr. Heniker to face his darkest forebodings.

If his heart was touched already, he had every reason to be dark. He knew Bendish very well, had

known him from a boy. There had always been a love-affair, and it had always been a point of personal honour with his lordship to succeed in it. What success meant depended upon the mood with which he entered the lists. Very often, nothing gross. Bendish was not yet a sensualist—at his age he would have been a monster if he had been. No; but sometimes he rode for a fall, sometimes nothing but despair, misery, starvation, a white face and a lonely death in the near future would content him. Then, you might depend upon it, however much he suffered—and he would require to wallow in suffering—the cruel fair would suffer ten times more. Not one minim of her cruelty might escape her. Remorse? Ah, she should be drenched with remorse. Or again, he might go in to win, to be the fortunate knight—and then good-bye to virtue. But while you could never tell with Bendish which way it was to be, except that he must have it whichever it was, you could never for a minute be in doubt as to the ultimate fate of the lady. She must suffer horribly—either for virtue lost or virtue retained; and Heniker, his life on it, didn't know where she was most to be pitied. There had been a Miss Mary Winton, there had been a Miss Sophia, a Miss Sara, a Miss Susan, a Lady Kitty; and then there had been lately the blonde Lady O——, the too easy and far too blonde. But she had a husband, and experience, and Heniker fancied that his lordship had had a tumble, that this idyll of Golder's Green was the consequence, and that once more

balms of Araby were to be applied to the cleansing of the gentleman's *amour propre*. What that might mean to a beautiful, sensitive, modest-minded girl he dared not think; but it was no good telling himself that he didn't care—he cared extremely; or that the thing must go on—because of course it would. Please Heaven it might be ended before irremediable mischief. One thing was clear: he must get the Bendish privilege before the Court of Claims as soon as might be. That was the only card he had to play.

So he sat on in the dark, waiting for his friend, wringing out his heart, frowning and biting his nails.

The candles heralded him; but the cloth had been laid and the Irish stew was smoking on the board before he appeared, curled and anointed, resplendent in his evening dress. To an exact taste his resplendence might have seemed excessive for a retirement so coy as to own but one sitting-room, or, indeed, to companion a man who must spend the evening in boots; but Lord Bendish was not minute in his consideration, and Heniker had other things to consider, for his part. But the dinner was very gay. His lordship would not be denied. He poured out his comments on men and affairs in one long and seemingly endless chain. Hope was high in him and belief in himself. The tonic air of Hampstead was your only physic, it was clear. Roger should try it—take a lodging near by and ride every morning into town on his hired hackney. Who knows? they might be capping verses after a few evenings. Bendish

would welcome that, because the evenings, he must own, were long and dull. Mrs. Welbore was exactly like any one of them—or say three of them, all Sundays, on end; and—worthy woman though she were—she was a dragon for virtue. The lovely Rose could not be seen of an evening, unguarded. Not for a moment. That was a bore, but it made the snatched moments, accidental meetings on the stair, glimpses through the open door—oh, enchanting! After all, provocation was the vital thing in love; passion needed a sting. The dart of Eros was barbed, Roger must recollect.

Welbore, the happily late Welbore, had been, Bendish understood, a clergyman, very often tipsy. He had left the widow badly off—or indeed found her so and left her no better, except for his own departure. She had betaken herself to this way of life, and called up to help her a sister's child, this fair Rose Pierson, with whom Roger was bound to fall in love. Miss Rose gave lessons—drawing, water-colours, other accomplishments of the kind. Bendish found that an added charm, because humility was a fine thing in itself, and especially becoming to beauty in the eyes of one who worshipped beauty as he did. It was an entrancing sight—let Roger remark: a girl with the bearing of a young queen bending to help brats spoil paper. So the young epicure rolled Rose Pierson over his tongue, and in the act kept his friend sizzling on the grid.

Mackintosh of the combed whiskers, the wise, the elderly, the soft-footed Mackintosh, was behind his

master's chair. It was understood that he lodged in the village and played bowls with the villagers when the weather was fine. He too had need of the art of making himself as snug as might be—for Lord Bendish was as restless as the wind, and never moved without Mackintosh. He alone was in the secret, except for Mrs. Bendish herself, his lordship's mother, and the two Henikers. It was fine now to see him marshalling the Welbore maid-servant. He did it entirely with his eyebrows and a very occasional protrusion of the lower lip. The girl watched his face with the pathetic dependence of a performing dog upon the showman's whip. Her eyes were wild with anxiety; tears stood in them; she was on the verge of nervous hysteria—so great was Mackintosh, so potential. With this little comedy of belowstairs as with everything else, and himself most of all, Lord Bendish was delighted.

Meantime the ladies would receive the gentlemen, and there should be tea and conversation. The gentle Mackintosh, with the sober voice of one who relieves himself of a secret of State, reported so much to his master, who paused wine-glass in the air, to flash out upon it, "Very good, Mackintosh—but will they overlook Mr. Heniker's boots?"

Mackintosh felt sure, but Bendish would push his rallying of Roger to the extreme point.

"You had better make sure, Mackintosh. Present my compliments—Mr. Bendish's compliments—to the ladies; and will they please to excuse Mr. Heniker's boots?"

"Oh, confound it, George!" Heniker protested, but the farce was solemnly played. A high-spirited lord can do what he will with his attorney—or he could in 1830.

Then they went up, Bendish talking (rather loudly—for he had taken his wine) to the very threshold. There by a small fire, with fancy work lifted towards the candles, sat Mrs. Welbore in black silk and a lace cap; there at the tea-table, intent upon her urn and cups, stood the tall Rose. Roger had a vision of her slim neck and white shoulders, of her bent head and glowing cheek, even as he advanced to make his bow to the lady of the house. Bendish introduced him simply—his good friend, Mr. Heniker—and left his boots alone. Mrs. Welbore inclined monumentally; and then came the moment for which our young man had been preparing himself. To Miss Pierson's full-orbed gaze he bowed, and said very plainly that he had had the honour of travelling with her that afternoon. Bendish caught the remark, stared and frowned at it. Very easily, as Roger knew (knowing his man well), he might have been thrown out. He was capable of being mortified by such a little thing, of being silenced for the evening—and the silence of such a man as Bendish could be as shattering to the nerves as a brass band: his sulks were contagious, slew their tens of thousands. But luckily he was in too good fettle. Roger had met her? Pooh, old Roger—there was nothing in that.

And a chance remark of Heniker's, as it happened, set him off for an evening's fireworks; for the young man, face to face with the pretty tall girl, had congratulated her and himself that nothing worse than noise had ensued upon the Radical mob which had beset their progress. She had smilingly agreed, with another momentary shaft from her fine eyes, when Bendish caught the allusion, and, stationed upon the hearth, held forth upon politics.

Heniker, seated by the younger lady, watched him rather than listened. He leaned his elbows to his knees, and clasped his hands to hold his chin. Sideways, as it were, he could be conscious of Rose Pierson's quickened bosom, and could guess but too well what impression the chiselled pale face, with its proud nose, proud and scornful lip and burning dark eyes, must make upon her. This young lord had everything, by Heaven! But poor Heniker was no rebel, being too well schooled for that. He was vaguely troubled, not dreaming of resistance. As for Mrs. Welbore, she sat at her work like an apathetic hillock, solemn in twilight—a broad-browed, flat-haired lady of dark hues. Such was her appearance; but she hid behind it an acute timidity which betrayed itself in little jerks of her needle, snatches at her gown, little flickerings of the fingers, twitchings of the lip—here, and in her darting eyes, like those of a field-mouse at a meal. She was immediately below the orator, within the first flush of his golden shower, a heavy and submissive Danaë. Ever since her birth she had accepted the doctrine

that men must talk and women seem to listen. Had she not been wedded to a pulpитеer?

Bendish was implying that but for accident (he meant the peerage) he had been leading those honest men into the House of Commons. Yet he deplored their short sight—for of what use would the vote be to them with the powers behind parliament? Did Mrs. Welbore guess, did his good Roger—but his eye was for Rose, who wondered, softly glowing,—the might of Society, of the King and his friends, of the Duke, as Duke, or my Lord Marquis This, or my Lady The-Other? Believe Bendish, the mob needed pikes, not votes. (Here Mrs. Welbore shut her eyes and shuddered.) But for every gilded Mumbo-Jumbo stuck up by rascals to overawe them, there were a thousand prostrate wretches hailing it for God and Lord. That was so, she might take his word for it; and that being so, what was the part for a man of observation, some small powers of reasoning, some fancy and moral force, to play on such a scene? The whip! The whip! Mrs. Welbore cowered. Hit folly as it flies, smartly, across the back, or even lower still. Mock them into sense, flog self-esteem into them. Well! that might yet be done again, as it had been done already. The whip stung doubly: it stung the body, but it stung the mind too—for it was a puny weapon to fight with, and humiliated the victim even while it routed him. Cervantes, Voltaire had not disdained it. It had, he might add, cleansed the Temple of old. He need not say that he disclaimed comparison—but let

them see. Who knows what a mouse may not do with an altar-candle? He paused: it was Heniker's cue.

"Out with it, George," he said. "We must hear you now. What is it? A satire? A mock-epic? I know you've been at something."

Bendish laughed it off—but not very far off. It came fluttering back. "Oh, I don't know that I'm ready—I don't know that I have the face—but—Well! the fact is I have been thinking about these things in my—out in this happy quiet. But really—Mrs. Welbore—I don't know whether—"

Mrs. Welbore was flattered, and would have been more so if she had known more exactly what all this meant. Roger entered the field again.

"My friend Mr. Bendish has been scourging the vices of Society, ma'am, in a poem. Pray let him read it to us." He turned to Rose Pierson, whose eyes sparkled.

"I am sure," said Mrs. Welbore, rather scared, it must be owned, at the word *vice*, "we shall be more than interested. It will be most kind of Mr. Bendish."

Bendish played with the notion. He took it up, as it were, in the palm of his hand and rootled in it, as if it had been snuff. "Well," he said at last, "on your heads be it. You shall hear me upon our pleasant vices." With which he excused himself and went to fetch his manuscript.

Mrs. Welbore, excited at the prospect and a little awed, turned impressed eyes upon Heniker.

"What a flow!" she said. "Most impassioned. I had no idea—"

Heniker agreed with her. He desired keenly to know what Rose Pierson thought; but she kept her looks for the fire.

Mrs. Welbore had resumed her needlework; and Heniker, seeing that if he spoke at all it must be of Bendish, and if of Bendish, to invite his praises, sat silent. The poet returned to his place on the hearth and declaimed a good part of *The Billiad*: a Satire.

Billy was, of course, our new King; the *Billiad* (reflex of his recent Homeric studies) was a forecast, put in mock retrospect, of his *faits et gestes*; rather of those of his ministers. Done with astonishing verve, with a ridicule which occasionally defeated itself, but a keenness of sight which omitted nothing, it had, with all that, a real literary flavour. Its fault—and it was a fault of youth—was that it spared nothing, but mocked the evil with the good. It was, in fact, as nihilistic as a young man can make it who enjoys the sense of doing a thing rather than the thing doing, and has a sharper eye upon the effect than the cause. There was unfortunately nobody present who knew how good it was. To Mrs. Welbore, the Duke of Devizes was not only a hero, but a Duke and a Prime Minister. References therefore to his unsafe seat in the hunting-field, to his indiscriminate gallantries, to his dry manner and sensibility to the tears of ladies passed over her head. These things did not happen to the great—for were they not great? How can you make ridiculous that

which is not so? She comfortably assumed that she had mistaken Bendish's meaning, and let it go at that. To her the wonder rather was to realise that the English language contained so many words which rhymed, and the chief pleasure she took the reflection that this young gentleman of fashion should give himself so much trouble in honour of her household. Heniker listened with a heavy heart. It was not at all in his line, but he saw that this kind of rattle must crumple him up. He guessed what it must mean to a simple home-dwelling lady. He could not help chuckling at some of the hits, to be sure. To have Lord B——'s snuffling nasal so neatly, to have Lord G——'s state of heart (with his hand upon it), and Lord S——'s state of the nation (with his foot upon it) coupled in two absurd lines; to get old Lord Maxonby's matrimonial squabbles and his gout so neatly as in the couplet,

And goaded M——by still clings to life,
Ridden by seven devils—and one wife;

to have Ward's thunder and Minors' penny whistle, the Poodle's strut and Alvanly's thumping stride, to have the Cock at Sutton face to face with the Pavilion, and a picture of the Foundling besieged by ill-matched erring couples picking out heirs at the eleventh hour: one must grin at such things. But by the Lord Harry, George went too far. Heniker was a gentleman, up in arms for his ideal. The ears of his lady must be guarded from the mere hint

that this was a wicked world. She walked in fairy-land: let all nerves be strained to prove this place the Eden she proclaimed it by her presence in it. He wished to God that George would stop—but George did not.

When the ladies had retired, dazzled into silence, and Heniker had gleaned what his friend had let fall from the harvest of Rose's fine eyes, the poet was by no means for bed. Mackintosh of the combed whisker supplied a passable claret and a devilled bone; Heniker must hear his projects.

He was full of vision, the vital young lord, full, too, of claret before he had done. His reading had discovered him a new rôle—a new Cynic was born in that heady hour. Here, in Myrtle Cottage, was his tub. From it should stream satire after satire, till England itself felt like this good bone, slashed into streaks, and every gaping wound raw with cayenne. A new Diogenes for a new age! A cynic of fashion, a cynic with a Mackintosh, with plenty of clean linen and passable claret—and a whip, by Heaven, a whip for bare shoulders and gartered legs. The Court of Claims might go hang, the House of Lords might go howl. The Bendishes came over with the First William and flicked the Fourth out of the sunlight. This was the dream—to which Heniker could only listen ruefully.

He learned that *The Billiad* was in the press, would be upon the town in six weeks at the furthest, proclaimed as by Lord Bendish. This, then, was certain, there was an end to concealment. The ladies

here would know whom they had entertained. "Dammy, and why not?" cried Bendish. "I shan't bite 'em. I can't help being a peer." He added, "My impression is that they'll rather like it." Heniker was sure that they would.

It was three in the morning before he could set out on a six-mile trudge through the miry lanes. He forged along under foggy stars with much to think of. But he was a simple as well as an honest young man. The best he could do for himself, that he did. He thought of Rose Pierson's face and clear grey eyes. He told himself that she was a glory to the Earth. To thank God for her and to do his duty seemed all the service he could render her as yet.

But he remembered that she gave lessons in town on Tuesdays and Fridays. Now this had been a Tuesday.

CHAPTER III

BENDISH OF BENDISH

ARGENT, a *Bend engrailed*, sable, was the Bendish coat, and the badge, now used as crest, a *Peacock* in *Pride*, with the motto *Numen inest*—which wags put thus into old English, into the mouth of the bird—*Nu, men, I nest*. They averred that the cuckoo had been the properer ensign for his present lordship, George, tenth Baron, and many an honest gentleman agreed with them before his career was closed.

There seems to be no doubt about the Norman pedigree. Giles de Bendès is in the Battle Abbey Roll, and there is or was a *bastide* in Normandy called La Ferté Bendès, which is quite near enough for modern genealogy.

You don't get them again with any certainty till the fourteenth century, when you find them in the Midlands—the Grafton country, it is called—in a stronghold called after them Castle Bendish. Peter de Bendish or Bendysshe, if you *will* have it, was Escheator of the shire in 1375. It was his grandson, another Giles, who was summoned to Parliament by Henry IV., *anno primo*, as Giles Bendysshe de Bendysshe, chivaler, and sat and voted accordingly. That was the beginning of a comfortable and com-

petent dignity which after events never seriously disturbed until near our own day.

Nevertheless the Bendishes took the losing side in most complications of public affairs. They were Lancastrians, and lost heads in the Wars of the Roses; then, what must they do but turn their coats before the time and rank with Richard at Bosworth? Yet Henry VIII. saw them rise again; and fat abbey lands were added to the Bendish fee. Bloody Mary kept them Catholics, and Elizabeth fleeced them for it. Charles found them Episcopalians and stoutly on his side. Under Cromwell they lost everything; but the George Bendish of Charles II. was the "wild lord" of their legend, and may well have sown the wind of our young man's whirlwind harvesting.

Tories under Anne, Jacobites in the '45, it wanted but the Jacobinism of our man (to say nothing of his rhymes) to finish the line; but so far as gear went, lands and tenements, flocks and herds, the George Lord Bendish of this chronicle inherited little but debts and tradition. He was not the son, but the great-nephew, of the ninth lord. His father had been the son of an Honourable Richard-William, brother of Adolphus-Charles, the ninth lord, by name and station plain John Bendish, Esquire, a man about town, too much about town, sometimes in the lock-up, sometimes in the sponging-house; a companion of the Prince—the Prince and Poins—who had finally abandoned his wife and child and settled down upon a shoal at Calais, where perhaps he soothed the last hours of Mr. Brummell. They had

much in common. There in due course an influenza aggravated his gout and floated him out of the reach of duns.

Mrs. Bendish, his widow, after a course of lodgings at watering-places—she was known at Bath, Matlock, Tunbridge, and the like—had set up her rest at Cheltenham, when, in 1822 or thereabouts, she received, first a letter, then a visit from Mr. Robert Heniker, the senior partner in the firm of Heniker and Breakspear, and father of our Roger Heniker. He had to tell her that her uncle by marriage, Lord Bendish, was failing (as she knew, he was childless), and that provision was to be made for the education of the heir to title and estates. Her George, who was then a fine boy of thirteen, must be taken from his grammar-school—it was his third or fourth—and replanted, it was thought, at Harrow. There he would mix with gentlemen of his own degree, future law-makers, generals, bishops, and chief-justices, future peers and gentlemen of the House of Commons, future holders indeed of everything worth having in England. He did not add—for he knew Mrs. Bendish at once—that Mr. George would also meet there his own son Roger, already an Harrovian; but there's no earthly harm in saying that when Mr. Heniker decided to send his son to Harrow he also decided that the next Lord Bendish should go there too. He did not mention his son to Mrs. Bendish, but he *did* mention the young Marquis of Pointsett, who was the Duke of Kendal's son, he *did* mention the Bendishes' distant kinsman the Earl of Twyford; he forgot not

Lord Ambleby, he forgot not the Earl of Dare. Of Mrs. Bendish I shall speak with more reticence than her son ever did even if I assert that these names had weight. They had so much that she did not stay to consider what more numerous, more splendid names might not be on the roll of Eton. She fell incontinent into the little shallow pit dugged for her by Mr. Robert Heniker—and she never found him out, oddly enough.

To Harrow, then, went young Bendish, and, again oddly enough, became the close friend of Roger Heniker, nominally his servant, but really his patron and benefactor. Roger Heniker did not see it in that light at all; but his father did, gladly, and Bendish himself did. Bendish, who was very intelligent, perfectly understood that his fagmaster was to be his servant in a few years' time, and this knowledge served as salt to his present porridge. Roger Heniker enjoyed the youngster—he liked his passionate enthusiasms, his absurd seriousness, his high spirits and quick-quenching. Himself was good-tempered to a fault, tender-hearted, and tolerant. He had no claim upon the world but to be let alone with its *fauna*. Man excepted, he was interested in everything on legs. He loved his fellow-men, but never studied them or knew anything of them. They were his equals, therefore (probably) like himself—but a squirrel on the nibble, a mole fanning out the black earth, a bird on the bough or aflock over the stubble—here was his paradise of delight.

He was not observant of men, yet one thing caught

his fancy, and thereafter never left him. He was at Bill on the first occasion after Bendish's accession of degree. The lad had received the news that morning early, and Roger had not seen him at close hand since it had come upon him. Of course there was no surprise in the thing—it had been common knowledge from the days of his entry; but between Becoming and Being there is a gap, and it is interesting to see a man cross it. Then came Bill—a rainy, squally afternoon, the boys' faces, flushed beneath their tumbled hair, making an irregular circle in the yard, crowded there for a moment of tedium before the plunge headlong again into their passionate quests—for all the world, Roger thought, like a pack of hounds held up by the huntsman's whip, and all their tongues hanging out!

The calling began: it was all an old routine, and you got used to hearing one fellow called Lord So-and-so, and another Mr. So-and-so, and another plain So-and-so. Plain Bendish, like plain Heniker, it had always been.

But at last—towards the end—Roger caught his breath. "Lord Bendish" was called, and he saw the quick and curious faces flash as they turned all one way. The name was answered clearly; Roger looked at his young friend. Bendish was as white as a dish-clout except for his eyes. They were as black as your hat. He saw the head sway, and the neck stiffen. Next minute the child was over. It wasn't long—he was round again in a minute; but there was one thing Heniker never, never ventured

to do, and that was to hint that Bendish had fainted on that occasion. Instinct told him that that would have been a mortal affront. I am not aware that anybody ever used that handy little weapon against him. Bendish would likely have killed him.

Heniker left Harrow at eighteen and went straight into his father's office under articles. The business of his life was laid before him, to which Harrow had been a prelude. He was put in charge of a nest of japanned boxes, entitled (in white paint) "Bendish Estates," "Bendish *v.* Rewby and Others," "New-biggin Lands," and the like. In and about these tin tombs he hopped, at first, like a monkey on a long chain, but as the years went over him sobered down to the semblance of that more decent figure, the blinkered donkey who plods round and round the beaten path of a draw-well. Before young Bendish had flung through his year at Oxford, and been given to understand by authority that it could not possibly be repeated, Heniker was the patient, decent man of business his father had been before him—with this difference, that he had been able to save a quiet relish of his patron, to view him apart as a freakish human creature as well as a purse-with-a-hole-in-it, which it was the task of his life to keep brimming with money.

George, Lord Bendish, at the hour of his majority was a young man who could do everything but see. He could feel intensely, think incisively and summarily, act in a flash, and bide his time with extreme

tenacity; but discernment was denied him. He could not gauge values, he could not tell the real from the appearance. He had a fund of emotion, a fount of passion in him which might have set up another Shakspeare for Englishmen to worship when he was well dead—he turned them both to melodrama or gave them out in ten-gallon jars to any painted minx who would take one, or a dozen of them. He valued most of all his possessions his peerage: that was a mark upon him he never lost sight of. He might have been the most distinguished peer in England but for his conviction that it was distinction enough to be a peer at all. Other careers attracted him for a time, and he pursued them with a zest that soon tired: poetry, politics, love, philosophy, affairs. He found them and their rewards flimsy stuff beside the solid fact of being a lord among commoners. It is almost incredible that a young man so gifted could be so dull, that a man so sensitive to fine things could be so vulgar-minded—but so it was. When he became—as he did become—an acknowledged poet he hugged the consciousness that he was first a lord; when he had men behind him who might have stormed and carried Westminster he thrilled to remember that a peer led them.

One of the simpler results of this flaw in his intelligence was that he did not mix much with his own class. He had much acquaintance but little intimacy with the great families. The Lansdownes, the Devonshires, the Wakes and Carylls, the Tiptofts and Botetorts would have merged his little barony

and smothered his poems in red books. He must have guessed at that by instinct. He never knew them well, and was never quite comfortable in their company. That means to say that he could not be certain of his own superior quality. He would love their daughters or dazzle their sons—that was easy; but themselves he kept for *The Billiad* and suchlike. He affected to despise them, but was really overawed. Their hues outshone his own; their ease made him uneasy. He had an affair of the heart, or head—he had just got over the worst of it when we met him at Golder's Green—with Lady O——. Her ladyship was both fair and frail, and would have followed as far as he would. What froze his passion at the source was the amused witness which Lord O—— himself, a good-tempered, bulky libertine of admitted prestige in Corinthian circles, bore to his lady's entanglement. Bendish shivered and froze, then fairly fled. Golder's Green revived him—simplicity, the love of virgin for virgin, the whip for Society's shoulders were the results. We may thank the O——s for them—and sincerely, for some of them bore good fruits. *The Billiad* made him famous, and is first-rate fun.

He was inspired when he did it—and whether inspired by other men's labours or not doesn't matter: he was inspired both to see and to report. He missed nothing ridiculous, and made much ridiculous which was nothing of the kind. He spread anger and consternation abroad, he enjoyed himself hugely, and he risked nothing of his own. He stretched himself out,

as it were, in the sun, and revelled in the result of his short if fiery labour. So it was to be with him while he lasted: fierce delight in work, fierce enjoyment, quick satiety. He flung over the troubled grey skies of England like a meteor or, as some say, a rocket that bunches out with a puff into coloured stars; and what he left behind him—fools to pay for their folly, honest men for their credulity, Rose Piersons ravished, Henikers impotent in misery—he neither knew nor cared to think. He had lived greatly and enjoyed himself vastly.

But most of this is to come. At the moment we may consider him happy—not in love with Rose Pierson at all, but very much with the idea of himself as her stooping lover, her prince in disguise. *The Billiad* would be out in a few weeks—and then we should see.

Meantime we have, I hope, seen something.

CHAPTER IV

EFFLUENTS OF "THE BILLIAD"

GRAY'S INN is fatally near to Holborn Bars, and you must not expect a young man enamoured, with offices in the one, to forget that on Tuesdays and Fridays, happening by the other, he might see if not be seen by, if not even saluted by, the lady of his heart. Roger Heniker neither forgot it, nor desired to forget it, but a virgin reticence withheld him for at least two weeks; and as all men are of all creatures begotten the most easily imposed upon, that hoary imposition that he who does not work neither shall he eat, found (and kept) him convinced that he must not break routine for all the urgency of his fever.

He loved; but he was in that first stage of the passion when the great vocation lies before him like a clear, shining, white road into the world seen from a mountain-top. The uplifting was, so far, enough. He could tell over the syllables of her name, glorify his parchments with her magic initials; he could bathe his heart (on Tuesdays and Fridays at one of the clock in the afternoon) with the light of her shed about Holborn Bars and wafted, surely, into Field Place where he sat at work. The need to see,

to hold with the eyes upon the eyes, to confess and receive confession; the need to touch—all these things were as yet far from him. The Sacred Image was hidden yet in shimmering veils, fold upon fold; the thought that one of them could be drawn was impiety.

However—these delicate hesitations gave way like mist before the mountain sun, and within ten days of his visit to Golder's Green he did happen to be passing Holborn Bars when Rose Pierson happened to be hastening up to the coach door. Then there was a startled gaze, a becoming blush, a timid smile to reward his deep salutation. He was absurdly breathless, but after the first moment her self-possession was absolute. She thanked him, she did very well. Her aunt was well. Golder's Green was fast losing its leaves; the frost had killed the last of the dahlias only that morning. But the sun had been quite strong when she travelled up to town. The fine weather had set in very shortly after Mr. Heniker's visit. We might usually hope for a fine October—Saint Luke's Summer. Heniker said that the fine weather had set in that very night, and was aghast at his gallantry, but not more than she was. He told Miss Pierson that he had left Myrtle Cottage at three in the morning, under stars. Miss Pierson was interested. Gentlemen, she supposed, had a great deal to say to each other, especially school friends. Heniker did not find that he could talk to her of Bendish—either for fear of surprising admissions out of her, or by pure instincts of honour, one

doesn't know. He was absorbed, too, in her presence. She seemed to draw his nature to herself.

"You are happy in your work? They are learning of you?" She had answered the first question by a shining look. The second she waived.

"They are dear children. I delight in them. I don't know that they have real talent. Of course, they are very young. But I have a pupil at home who is extraordinary, at least to me, who am very ordinary. I think that I learn of her, rather than teach her."

Heniker thought that there was no better way of learning, and she agreed. They sketched together, she said, from Nature. The fine weather allowed it.

The coach was to start, and she left him with a kind look. He was carried all day upon exalted waves of air, being a simple soul. The menace of Bendish was forgotten in the pressure of Bendish's affairs.

There was Mrs. Bendish to see, and placate, so far as might be. She lived, chiefly upon grudges, in a dismal old white house smothered in laurels at Ongar in Essex—a heavy-browed, flushed, and fat woman, of the kind that can only be quickened to live at all by a sense of intolerable injury. The fact is that she had been plentifully injured. Her husband had been unfaithful, savage, biting, and ruinous; she had spoilt her son until he despised her; and now he was discarding the only things in

the world which she was capable of valuing. She flamed and gloomed by turns upon the young lawyer, fumed and surged like a black satin volcano from her sofa. She saw everything that George did as a studied insult to herself. Thus and thus he repaid her privations and incredible pains—by stab after stab. He was like his wicked father, profligate, spendthrift, a mocking spirit. Was there a female at the back of all this? She was certain there was a female. Would Heniker (she called father and son alike Heniker, putting them in their places) be so good as to relate Lord Bendish's establishment at Golder's Green? Heniker did, omitting Rose Pier-son. And what was this she read in the *Morning Post*? Stay—she had it cut out. "It is rumoured that a young gentleman of rank—whisper has it L——d B——sh—is about to surprise his friends and acquaintances by a publication of a *seasoned* order, where the salt of wit is heightened by the pepper of vivacious personal comment. His lordship will spare neither age nor sex, we learn. Even the *Mon-arch*, who politically hath neither parts nor passions, must take his turn! We tremble." What was the meaning of that? let her ask—what could its meaning be but one more sword in her bosom? If this scandalous business were to go on she must die in the ruins of Society. She presumed that her son did not seek the name of murderer. Yet what was left to her but to die—or live to be hissed in the very streets as the mother of a Blasphemer?

In extenuation Heniker could only put forward his

lordship's high spirits and youth. He did his best for *The Billiad*, avoiding the confession that he had listened to it, and chuckled. He admitted that it was now binding, owned that it must appear, but suggested that possibly it would fall flat—and inflamed the dowager. Her smouldering, heavy eyes flashed; she heaved like the sea. It was hardly likely that the work of Lord Bendish would fall flat, and hardly became a retainer to suggest it. Did Heniker think that a Lord Bendish was a nobody? By these means he diverted her fury to himself, and presently slid it deftly out of sight by talking of the Coronation and the Court of Claims. He thought that his lordship would take an interest in that; and if he did, the taking of his seat would follow; and upon that, who knew? It was possible that his lordship's interest might light upon politics. He was wayward, impulsive, very young, no doubt, but—Here he shrugged. Mrs. Bendish, absurd creature, was all on edge, and now passionately defensive.

"My son," she said, "will do what becomes him, I can't doubt. We need not discuss his political or social career. We will confine ourselves to the business of the Estate, if you please."

Really, Heniker thought, he had guided the old beast pretty neatly.

And it seemed that he had. Her mood persisted, and not only survived the appearance of *The Billiad*, but complacently accepted its roaring success. For the dare-devil, precocious, irresistible thing flung itself upon the town, and was in all men's mouths in

a week. Diners capped each other with it across great tables; a line of it flew about the House of Commons. Leigh Hunt had two columns of it in *The Examiner*, and wrote, warmly enthusiastic, to the noble author. The Tories laughed, the Jacobins cheered; the Whigs were glum. But there was no doubt of the wit of the thing, nor of its stinging merit. Mrs. Bendish, declaring that she had always predicted this, and had been waiting for it, was gloomily happy for a week and forgot to be bored. There were the Reviews to come, of course; but Mrs. Bendish knew nothing of the Reviews, and would have cared less. And she was quite right. No amount of drenching from Gifford or Lockhart would put out a fire which every breath in London was fanning. Lord Bendish was a hard hitter, young though he were; and a noble youth who could cut at the Duke, and draw blood—for that he did, they said—must be taken gravely by the Reviews. But of all that in its place. A week after publication, in the height of the ferment, Heniker took to the Mill Hill stage—on a Tuesday.

He saw immediately that Rose Pierson knew all. She was too serious to care to hide it from him. She was too serious to care whether she met Heniker or not. You may say that there is always a something discernible—a flutter, a momentary waver of the blood—when a girl meets an infrequent acquaintance who admires her. But there was nothing of the sort; she was preoccupied, very grave. She became aware of him and his hat in hand, she bowed,

smiled faintly, and let him take her hand for a moment. She didn't seem at all interested in his travelling clothes—took his company as a matter of course. Here was the worst of all misfortunes! Heniker fought the sinking of his heart, like a man and a gentleman. He chattered away and ignored her silence. Then he did a bold and very right thing. He gave Bendish his title. "I hope I shall find Lord Bendish at home," he said. "I had no time to write for an appointment."

The effect was to open the floodgates. A happy move of his. Rose was grateful.

"Yes, oh, yes," she said. "He is at home—for the present." Then she strained her pretty head away from him; and then turned it sharply his way. Her eyes were large, full of questioning. "You know him—his lordship—well?"

"I'm his family lawyer," Heniker said, "or my father is. It's hereditary in our family, since my great-grandfather's time. Yes, I know him very well. I was sent to school with him that I might. You may say that I was bred up to know him well. But perhaps I know him better than you might have expected. He took to me at Harrow. There was no reason why he should."

She looked gently at him and enheartened him to proceed.

"I suppose he's elated with the success of his poem. It's very clever indeed; it's made an enormous hit. Even we professional people know that. He told you as much, I expect?"

"He gave me a copy of it," she said. "It was very kind of him."

"He would naturally give it to you," Heniker admitted. "You admire it?"

Her reserve was growing again. "I don't understand it all, of course. It is about great people I have only read of in the newspapers—or heard of. Lord Bendish has explained some of it. It's very wonderful, I think."

Heniker laughed. "It will make him famous, or notorious. Everybody will want to see him."

She was now very serious: he noticed that—not alarmed, not unprepared, but serious.

"I am sure of that. He will have to take his place in the world."

Heniker nodded. "I think so. He won't like leaving Golder's Green, but—he must take his seat, you see. There's to be the Coronation next year—he must walk in that. There's a ceremony to be performed by the Lord Bendish of the time. We think he should take his seat first."

She knew that. "Yes, he has said so." Then she sighed, very lightly, and looked down at her gloved hands. They resumed conversation by and by, but only fitfully; and there was no getting away from Bendish. He filled the poor girl's sky.

A stroke of good fortune was in store for him, however. His lordship was out, he was told, on horseback. So a horse was now added to the idyll! Heniker immediately asked his companion if he might pay his respects to Mrs. Welbore, and this was al-

lowed. The solemn lady was glad to see him, for she had much to say—upon the invariable subject. She had had her suspicions, she said at once; there had been an air about his lordship, a kind of habit of ascendancy. Not but what he had always been the soul of courtesy to herself and her niece. Perfectly the gentleman from first to last—grateful, ludicrously grateful for what, after all, was his due as a tenant in the house. But she had not been deceived, though she perfectly appreciated his lordship's reason for retirement. However, that was all over. Some talents could not be hid, some lights burned their bushels. Mr. Heniker must forgive her. She was naturally interested in her distinguished guest. Then followed a string of more or less oblique questions, whose drift poor Heniker could not fail to see.

He made the best of his lordship and his prospects, and opened out wherever he thought it safe to do so. Mrs. Welbore, endlessly stitching, drank deep draughts of wonder. Rose, pale and grave-eyed, said nothing, but pondered her case. In the midst of it all a mighty baying of dogs broke out, then growlings, scufflings, his lordship's voice in wild command, finally piercing yells from the vanquished. Heniker looked up, and Rose flashed to the window.

Mrs. Welbore explained that Lord Bendish had brought down two wolf-hounds of late, terrific creatures. The farmer's dog opposite was the victim. So his lordship was making himself comfortable after

his manner, which demanded that everybody else should be uncomfortable! Heniker rose to take leave.

Mrs. Welbore beamed upon him. "It has been a great pleasure to us, Mr. Heniker—we are so much interested. It is natural. Lord Bendish will be leaving us, I fear—but he speaks very kindly of future meetings. We have very few friends—neighbours we have, but hardly friends."

Heniker hoped that she would count upon him.

"We shall, Mr. Heniker," said the lady, "if—there may be an occasion." Here she sighed and glanced at Rose's stiff young back. "Indeed I hope you will visit us again."

"You may be sure of me," Heniker said warmly, and shook hands. Rose faced him, but not with the eyes. He took her hand, bowed over it, and left her sorrowing.

Outside the door, upon the stair-head, stood the meditative Mackintosh, twirling a whisker. His lordship had returned and would see Mr. Heniker at his convenience.

"I'm going to his lordship now," Heniker said; but Mackintosh still twirled and meditated. At last he gave out. Mackintosh knew that we were going to take our place in the great world again. Not that anything had been said, or any orders given. Not a word. But—"His lordship have had Mr. Stultz here. Twice he have been down, fitting his lordship."

That settled it. Mr. Stultz was the fashiona-

ble tailor—of Cork Street. There lived no greater than he.

But Bendish kept his counsel. He hailed his friend cheerfully, and received his congratulations as a matter of course. It was far from him to be congratulated except as a matter of polite convention. You might as well congratulate the Sun upon giving men sunstrokes. Success of the thing had been a matter of course. Dammy, the thing was good. Those rascals knew a good thing. Let 'em praise, so long as they wriggled—and the more they wriggled the louder they would praise. Success of the kind, after all, did not mean very much. It was all very well to whip the rascals, but who was going to drill 'em, who to lead 'em? That was what we wanted: leadership. Look at this Reform absurdity. What were they doing—raving at the Duke! Yes, but the Duke was a good drill-sergeant; there was no better. It's no good railing at a man, wagging your chin at him, shaking your fist at him when the moment he calls out Attention! in goes the one to your stock, and your other opens out and feels for the seam of your breeches. He had the habit of command, didn't Roger see? and the mob had the habit of obedience. There's an end of it. The fellows wanted a leader of that kind, a man who could handle men. Lord Bendish stiffened his fine small head and stared at Heniker, pausing for a reply. He looked every inch the leader at the moment, and felt it. Heniker observed him keenly. So that was

what he was after! That was the very latest out-crop of *The Billiad*!

The taking of his seat was discussed—by Heniker. Bendish listened as if it was some other man's seat, any other man's, which was in question. Peers would have to be found to introduce him, two barons. Heniker had been wondering whether *The Billiad* might not make it rather difficult. Had he left any barons unwhipt? And if he had, would the unwhipt feel grateful for their omission, or much more whipt because of it? That's the worst of the personal note in literature. It seemed that Bendish had grimly relished the dilemma. Mrs. Bendish had named Lords Ravage and Ryehouse. Lord Bendish flung up his head. Then there was Lord Newtimber, a distant connexion. Lord Bendish turned on his heel.

He faced the fire. "I can't help you in these sort of things," he said. "They are not within my range. I don't suppose it matters a curse what fools do fools' work. I should have said—mind you, I know nothing about it—that the officials would manage it all. It's only a thing of routine, I imagine." Heniker now pointed out that the Lord Chancellor himself had by no means escaped the whip of *The Billiad*. Bendish shrugged his shoulder, bored. If he was really interested—and Heniker believed it—he was concealing it very closely. His own notion was that his lordship was rather scared lest he should get nobody to support him, and was throwing up earth-works in haste. But the truth is that Bendish was mortified by his own isolation. He was a peer with

very few peers, and the friendship of what few he had was imperilled by *The Billiad*. The success of that work would easily have consoled him for their loss; but here was another matter. Here was Heniker witness to the nakedness of his estate. A peer casting about for friends—a triumphant poet begging at the door! Bendish was, as we now say, very sick indeed. He had been too caustic by half.

There was no pressure put upon Roger to stay to dinner to-night. The six o'clock stage was caught.

CHAPTER V

LORD BENDISH IN THE UPPER AIR

SUPPORTERS in the House were found by the joint exertions of Mrs. Bendish, who wrote tragic letters of many sheets, of old Mr. Heniker, to whom practice had given a wheedling slope of the shoulder, hard to be resisted, and by Roger with his square chin and humorous eyes. Lord Ravage refused flatly, calling Bendish a chimney-sweep. "If he smothers himself with soot from my front chimney," said his lordship, "let him wash it off. I'm not inclined for the work." An official in the Lord Chancellor's department admitted that two barons might be found—and named one—but went on to say that friends or political sympathisers were more usual and more acceptable. "Your noble friend, Mr. Heniker, holds rather fantastical notions of politics," he then said. "I don't know that many of their lordships are prepared to go his length." Roger supposed that a good many of their lordships neither knew nor cared what lengths Lord Bendish could attain. "Yes, yes," said the gentleman, "but he's been talking about their little weaknesses—and uncommonly neatly he's done it. Some of them are rather sore, Mr. Heniker, as I happen to know."

"Lord Bendish is very young, sir," Roger pleaded; but did not help his cause.

The gentleman said, "I know he is. But *they* are not so young as they might be, some of 'em. And they don't like it."

However, the thing was done. Lord Ryehouse, a scarlet and incredibly irascible old peer, was one. "Bl——t him, I'll do it for the sake of his rascal of a father, who's dead. But I'll cut him dead afterwards for his own sake." So said Lord Ryehouse. As for Lord Newtimber, he was very young and very foolish. He would have done anything for anybody. So there you were.

These results were communicated to Bendish at Golder's Green, and answered after many days—from Hartford Bridge Hall! Now Hartford Bridge Hall was the Hampshire house of the Earl and Countess of O——, where Bendish had better not have been. Alas, for the Rose of Golder's Green—alas, for her honest lover! Heniker's heart bled for her; but business had to be done. The Winchester coach took him down to the great winged house spread out like a pink-and-white fan in a clearing of the woods—with a lake and mirrored swans, with a Temple of Vesta, and a copy of John of Bologna's "Mercury," and deer in a park about it—and terraces to walk upon when it was dry, and long ranges of white-and-gold chambers within.

Here his lordship received his lawyer in a room full of guns and whips and back numbers of the *Annual Register*. Here his lordship was the young man of

fashion, with brains added. His dress was handsome, and yet distinctive. He was the dandy with a difference—the dandy with a poet's negligence about the shirt-collar, which was open to the breast, with a suggestion of the statue of Sophocles about the superfine black cloak which hung from his shoulders and could be folded about him with a sweep of the covered arm.

He was affable, but not to be touched. "Ah, my dear Roger, this is good of you! Punctual to the minute. I anticipated it, and took my precautions. You are two hours before my usual time for rising. Here we play late—and deep, confound it. I must ask for supplies, my dear fellow. Now, what were we to discuss?"

Roger, taking things as they came, produced his papers and proposals. But Bendish was in pick-some mood. He scoffed at his two noble supporters, procured with such pains; he called Lord Ryehouse an old Pan-in-breeches, and as for my Lord Newtimber, averred that a better peer could be made out of the crumb of bread and a couple of currants. Besides, his modern patent put him out of the question. He was only the third peer really—indeed, since nobody knew who his father was or was not, was he even so much? "I must get better furniture than that, Roger, if you please," he said finally, his back to the fire. "I'll take Ryehouse for my father's sake—but I refuse Newtimber for my mother's. His mother was a cousin of mine's—but not famous for discretion, or taste. There's no reason for calling

remark upon our parents—it's hardly decent. No, no, out with him." Finally, he thought of a man for himself. There was Lord Barwise here, in the house, a grandson of that old Lady Morfa, the beaked Dowager of the Midlands, guardian of the fair virgin Hermia Chambre—bitterly old, but extremely famous. Barwise would do. Take Barwise.

Lord Barwise was found somewhere in the house before Heniker left it, and agreed. He told Bendish that he'd be delighted, and Bendish, in reporting this to his lawyer, sneered at him for his pains—that he was easily pleased.

Other matters, the Court of Claims and the like, were put off till after the House of Lords. The writ must issue, of course, the robes and coronet must be provided, the coach be put in order; and Bendish must have plenty of notice. His address was here for the present, but St. James's Street would always find him. Golder's Green was not mentioned. It might never have existed. Plainly the idyll was over, and Rose Pierson thrown into the corner with the other toys, the masks, the *Iliad*, the passable claret, and Turkish dressing-gown. But she had served to inspire the Scourge of Society, of her had sprung, light and fierce and irresistible, *The Billiad*. What more could she want? There was nothing for Heniker to do but acquiesce in his patron's motions, and the less flicker he betrayed in his light blue eyes the better for business. He departed, charged with commissions which urgently related to the finding of money.

His heart bled for Rose, but he literally dared not haunt Holborn Bars just yet, and had no time for a call. It was mid-November, wanted a month to Christmas when, happening to pass the coach-office, he suddenly caught at his breath to recognise the Mill Hill stage about to start. His brain spun. It was a Tuesday! The coachman had gathered up his reins and given a final poke with the butt of his whip to his apron of blanket. The guard swung up to his perch and slapped to the door. Roger's eyes darted into the recesses of the coach. It was empty. Rose came no more to town then! On Friday he went, beatingly but deliberately, to the place. She was not there. A week after that he had a letter from Mrs. Welbore asking the favour of a short interview. He replied that he would wait upon her on a near evening; and on Monday, having hired a horse, rode down to Golder's Green. A store of tender concern, such as he had not guessed himself to possess, went with him. He found himself losing the lover in the friend, vowing that he would by all means bring Bendish back to Rose's arms—cost what it might, feeling that the cost would be as nothing to the joy of drying her tears.

Mrs. Welbore did not affect disguise of her concern. She did not affect anything at all. She seemed very troubled. Lord Bendish, she said, had paid court to her Rose. They had exchanged vows, locks of hair. From the very first he had been attracted to her, and latterly she (Mrs. Welbore) had been prevailed upon—by his lordship's eloquence—

to look at it as a settled thing. It was madness, perhaps, but— "I assure you, Mr. Heniker, his lordship sat there, just where you are, and spoke of Rose most affectionately—with tears in his eyes. He said that she had changed his whole being. He implored me to sanction his addresses. He spoke of me also in terms of the greatest deference and respect, far above my deserts. What could I do?"

Nothing—Heniker knew it well. He asked, where was Miss Rose? Mrs. Welbore said that she was here, going about her duties as usual; but sadly cast down. She knew that Mr. Heniker was coming, but had begged to be excused. Heniker bowed his head to that.

Then he said, with grave signs of disturbance in his honest face, "I should tell you, ma'am, that I had hoped for your leave to become suitor for your niece. I can't profess to call myself anything more than an honest man, a gentleman, I hope. It is not splendid—but there's a competency, and it may be more. I work hard, and there's plenty work for me to do. I am to be my father's partner. But in your troubles—well, it seemed right to tell you."

He did not lift his eyes from the carpet, to see the shining pity in the lady's. She indeed pitied while she shone. A peer had offered himself, and this poor young man had hopes—Welladay! Of this, however, nothing in her reply.

"Dear, dear me! But nothing to Rose of this, Mr. Heniker. Of course—these are early days.

His lordship's attentions could not have been more pronounced. The devotion of a noble poet! One cannot believe that he—my poor Rose—no, no!" She was very much disturbed; but presently be-thought her of immediate duty. "I shall respect your confidence, Mr. Heniker, you may be assured. If it had been God's will—but we must not question His judgments. My wounded Rose!" She found her pocket-handkerchief and applied it. Heniker, in great trouble, asked, should he speak to his lordship? Mrs. Welbore gasped.

"Really—I hardly know. Not as from *us*, Mr. Heniker—on no account. But I need not say that, I am sure. But if you think—it would be generous—under the circumstances more than generous. The fact is, I must tell you, that we have never had to do with a gentleman of rank—but you will know best. My husband, as a clergyman, had a great acquaintance among the rich and powerful. There was Admiral Gibbsley, and Sir Richard Vinney—I remember him well, a Knight of the Bath. We were almost intimate in that house. But he was quite an elderly man at the time. Then there used to be Foxhall—Squire Foxhall they called him—whose daughter Ann married Sir Wilkin Blythe. They lived well—very expensively: in fact too well. It couldn't have lasted longer than it did. I used to see what went down into the servants' hall. You would hardly believe it. Whole joints—with just a snick out of them. But Lord Bendish, of course!—One felt that that was a very different matter, and—" She shook her head

and blinked over her needle. "I really don't know what to do for the best. Ah, my poor child!"

Heniker went his ways, more than troubled how to act. As a lover he was passionate for his Rose's uplifting. What peerage could be tribute enough to her beauty and exquisite simplicity? What sacrifice enough could he make to her? Would his own heart suffice, torn out and flung under Bendish's spurning heel? Yes, but if his judgment were to go after his heart, would that serve her? Her simplicity in the whirlpool of Bendish! He saw her standing piteous in a thin gown, distraught by the gusty eddies of the town—the town and Bendish in it, a white-faced, mocking King of Revels. Hateful! And he had undertaken to further it! He shook his head, tightened his lips, and swore that he must be false to his heart for her sake. Luckily he was spared his pains. The next day brought him a letter from Mrs. Welbore. Rose had gathered what was afoot, and would have none of it. "She is quite positive," Mrs. Welbore wrote, "that nothing is to be done, not a word said. She tells me that she relies upon you. What more can I say?" Nothing, thank the Lord! His conscience was clear, and he felt a load off him.

So to the House of Lords, on a raw January noon. There are finer portraits of Lord Bendish than that which Spee, R.A., did of him in his robes—young, bullet-headed, and quick-contemptuous, one white silk leg in advance, the crimson robe cascading about

in the background, one hand to hold it back, in the other the balled and tasselled coronet; but it was so that he appeared—a very noble figure of a young man, if a thought too conscious of his different clay—to his mother and his friends, on the morning of that day of epiphany. Heniker, obscurely in the throng, admitted his different clay, and grudged him nothing. Literary friends, like bright-eyed Mr. Hunt, like twinkling, twirling Mr. Moore, admitted it with enthusiasm—honest enthusiasm that case so splendid should hold a dashing poet. The one glowed, the other positively crowed to see. There were dandies there too—Berdmore Wilkes was one, a lean and tanned Corinthian; Sir Carnaby Hodges of Leicestershire, crimson and bulging between his buttons; Mordaunt, the darkly smiling; and Poodle Byng, the very fair; but there were no peers. Lord O—— had promised, but he had not come. Mrs. Bendish had counted upon Lord Appleby up to the last minute. But *The Billiad* had been too much for him—he had figured in it with his Keepsake carollings, and at the last minute was d——d if he would, and didn't.

But Bendish was in a conquering mood, and all was well. He went down to the House in his coach, a Jacobin to the core. The Marquis de Mirabeau was the hero of the dreaming mind, a spot of intense light in the flame-coloured field—beside him the Marquis de Lafayette. These two gentlemen were his ghostly supporters, shadowing my Lords Rye-house and Barwise up to the very Woolsack.

The body of the House was rather empty; but the

galleries were filled with ladies. One waved a handkerchief, I understand.

Society engulfed the new peer, who swam gaily among the painted craft upon the flood. Roger Heniker went about his business like a man, not forgetting his love, and, it was to appear, not forgotten. She had resumed her lessons in London; he happened upon her upon an afternoon returning to catch the stage, was smiled upon gravely, and allowed to turn back upon her way. She was quiet and pensive, but not so reserved. She seemed to have lost some of her maiden prickles in her recent grapple with life. It did not seem impertinence in him to question her, not impossible for her to ask him questions. They parted like old friends, and he felt absurdly elate. There was no appointment, of course, but certainly an understanding that she was due in town on certain named days. He had reminded her of Tuesdays and Fridays—whereupon she had told him clearly that now her days were Mondays and Thursdays. He thought himself very bold (he remembered afterwards how bold he had felt) when he had repeated after her, "Ah, Mondays and Thursdays!" Her eyes had not wavered as she had bowed her confirmation. He believed that a good sign—not an appointment, of course, but an understanding that he should see her on Monday. And so he did; and on Thursday too. By and by it became almost as of course that they should meet, and sometimes he thought that she looked out for him. If Bendish

was swimming in a flood these late winter, early spring days, his family lawyer was oaring the upper air. Not once was his lordship touched upon in their talk, nor poetry either. It was all very simple, no doubt, made up of little things, dear only to lovers. They were gathering, however, quite a store of trifles about which you can ask, Do you remember—? There's a deal for a lover in that. It's a step in advance.

Then he rode down one Sunday and saw the ladies. He accompanied them to church in the morning, dined, and took Rose for a walk in the sere fields. In a woodland, sheltered from the wind, he stammered out his question and got his answer.

He made his essay gallantly, extenuating himself, excusing also his temerity. He gave her to understand that he was her servant for life, whether she would or not. Might he hope, at any rate? Rose looked at him presently—gently, with brimming eyes and shaking head.

"You are very kind. You make me proud—and contented, I think. But I can't." Then she cried and all his fire was turned to cover her retreat. He forgot his hopes entirely before this dreadful fact of her tears and very present trouble. He calmed her, worked himself up to a fine strain of small talk, and brought her home to Myrtle Cottage. There he sat, talking nineteen to the dozen of anything, everything, and nothing at all. He succeeded. She grew calmer, suffered him to take her to evening church, and smiled a friendly and grateful farewell to him at the

parting hour. In fact, the poor girl did her best to thank him. "You have been very, very kind to me. I can't speak about it—" "For God's sake, don't try," he had interposed. She shook her head. "No, no, I can't. Good-bye." "You will be in town to-morrow?" he had asked. She had nodded, still smiling, and stood to see him go. With that he must be content.

CHAPTER VI

“OUTRE-TOMBE”

IN April, when lambs frisk and ladies' eyes are bright with promise, Lord Bendish lent himself to amorousness, and was understood to be certainly suitor for a very fair person, the flaxen Lady Ann H——, daughter of the Earl of O——, who was as dumb, and some said as cold, as a piece of sculptor's work, but incredibly handsome and very well off. Rumours of this sounded in the newspapers; and in club windows high-stocked gentlemen assured each other with nudges, winks, and whispers behind the hand. A taint of scandal helped to make the affair complicated and savoury at once. *Matre pulchrâ filia pulchrior* was quoted: first, I believe, by Mr. Moore, Anacreon Moore, in a whisper which could have been heard across St. James's Street; but very soon all the pack had it, and cried it from Highbury Barn to Peckham Rye. It is probable that some far-borne echo of all this reached Golder's Green, where the good Heniker diligently served. He himself knew all about it, of course, hoped that the main fact was true, and left the rest to the judgment of Heaven. He watched his beloved like a terrier waiting at a rat-hole, but never tried to get behind her reserve,

which she, for her part, never broke. The name of Bendish was unheard between them.

But just about that time a matter of business was put into Roger's hands which was important enough to keep Lord Bendish out of his head for a while. He was sent for by the Duke of Devizes, who, in a letter written in his own sprawling hand, presented his compliments to Mr. Heniker the younger, and desired his attendance at Wake House on Thursday morning at ten of the clock, in the forenoon, "upon a matter of private business, for which his services have been recommended to the Duke by Mr. Tremeneer, his legal adviser." Now Mr. Tremeneer was a great man in the law, one of the hierarchy, whose offices were in Mayfair, but the limits of his power over all the Inns of Court. To be put forward by Mr. Tremeneer was honour enough for a young man not long admitted; to be put forward into the Duke's notice was a thunderclap of honour. For if Tremeneer was a great lawyer, the Duke was a great man. It would be hard to name a greater in England. He was a man who by his personal force alone had held off Reform, and continued to hold it, though towns flamed and armed hordes besieged Palace Yard. He was much more famous than the King. When you spoke of the Lords, you implied the Duke of Devizes; when you named England to the Councils of Europe you as good as named him. Upon young Heniker and his little particular eddy in the great river of affairs you could not have had a greater effect if you had sent a scarlet rider from

Windsor into Field Place. Such a summons as this might have made even Bendish forget his different clay for a minute or two, though he would have died sooner than admit it, even to himself. Old Mr. Heniker, rounding his chin with his soft pink hand or furrowing in his white whiskers, was a study in twinkles and quirks when Roger brought him in the stiff, gilt-edged sheet. Sly pleasure flickered about his face like the lightning of summer nights. "Aha, my boy, we are making way in the world! Now we see what Harrow may be worth to a young man of parts! Now let me tell you that this is—aha!—not wholly unexpected." He was fond of double negatives, especially when he was pleased. They seemed to let down his dignity gently into jocularly, as you use rollers to launch a liner.

"No, no," he went on, leaning at ease over his elbow-chair and looking up to the ceiling, tossing also his foot as you might dance a baby—"the fact is that I and Tremenheer happened to meet, not so long ago, at the Cutlers' Feast. We were *vis-à-vis*; he is always very fair-spoken to me—Tremenheer—sour-faced old boy, too much the great man, but—no, no, I have nothing to complain of. By and by he asked me about you—spoke of his boy Jack too. I reminded him you had been schoolfellows on the hill. 'To be sure they were,' says he. 'That's how I have your Roger in mind now. Steady fellow, I hear.' I said that there was nothing to quarrel with in that quarter, but I was easy with the old boy, you know, for I hear that Jack Tremenheer's

in the cavalry, and that we don't altogether like the life he's leading. No, no, we are not too happy about Master Jack and his fine friends. Well, then, after one thing and another, he ups and mentions this matter of the Duke's. Says he can't take it up—has no one to send—delicate job, he tells me. I rather fancy, you know, it's not altogether unconnected with the Lancelot divorce—sad affair that was—his Grace has never been quite the same man, they tell me. But, you know, his Grace is—well, well! *Sunt quos curriculis pulverem Olympicum*—hey, you rascal? His Grace was never averse to the ladies, let's admit. To put it no stronger, hey? But, by Heaven, that don't make him lighter-handed with the men. The reins of State, hey? He's a whip, is the Duke. But now Mr. Lancelot's dead I don't know what may be in the wind. He may be for another installation at Wake House. However, that will be for you to tell me, unless your mouth is sealed, of course." He gazed pleasantly before him and recalled himself with an effort to present affairs. Roger replied to his summons that he would wait upon his Grace at the hour appointed.

He found the great man, locally remote in his vast house, at the end of a long, thick-piled corridor, behind folding mahogany doors, and then at the farther end of a library of many windows. He was standing to write with a turkey quill, a spruce figure of a frosty, elderly gentleman, spare on his white poll, trim and spare in the white whisker which was

brushed forward to his cheek and cut off straight to a point level with the cheek-bone. He wore a dark-blue frock, canary-yellow waistcoat, and nankeen trousers tightly strapped. His face was brick-red and his eyes were cold blue—the blue of a glacier in the sun. His manner was easy, but very dry. He took snuff daintily, and was distressed at a speck remaining on his sleeve. He had a thin-lipped mouth, like a trap, and seldom looked at you when he talked. If by any chance he did, it was a signal for your instant obedience.

He nodded pleasantly, glancing up at his visitor, finished his letter and signed it with care. Then he left his desk and went towards the fire, holding out his fine hands to it. The sun was full upon it and made it a garish thing; yet the Duke seemed chilly.

Presently he turned his back to it and began: "My friend Charles Lancelot died last Christmas and made me his executor. I wish he hadn't, but it's one of those things a man doesn't refuse his friend. Now I don't know whether you know it, but it's necessary for me to tell you that I was very fond of his wife, and still am. She's alive and living abroad, in Italy, married to the man she ran away with, a young fellow named Poore—Gervase Poore. My friend Lancelot behaved romantically in the affair. He didn't condone it—though I do, myself—but he accepted it as a beating. More than that, he went home and put a divorce through as decently and quietly as such a thing can be done; and then did his best to renounce her marriage-settlement, and

get her money resettled on her new marriage. However, nothing came of that, because the Poores wouldn't hear of it. The young man's as poor as a rat, but he's got the pride of the devil, and I like him for it. As for her, you mustn't ask me to say much. I'm not a fair judge of her. We'll leave her out as far as we can. . . . Well, now Lancelot dies. He dies with her name on his lips—it was literally the last word he breathed (for I was with him and heard it)—and with her affairs, it's evident, in his head, or heart, whichever you please. He makes me his executor, and leaves all his property, I'll trouble you, to this fellow Poore—not to her, but to Poore—in trust for her and the children of the marriage, if there be any; and there are, you know—and if there ain't as many more as you please it will be a very odd thing, in my opinion. Well, Mr. Heniker, here's what I want of you. I want you to go out to Rapallo, where the Poores live, and get them to take this gift from the grave. They ought to do it. I've said so in writing—but I have my doubts and fears. My friend will walk if they don't; the grass won't grow on him. I think she'd do it, but for him; and I desire you to get hold of her, rather than him. If you succeed in putting her right with the dead man's view of the thing, you may leave her to talk over the living man. Trust a woman to do that, when once she sees what she ought to do. . . . ”

Here the Duke paused, took snuff prodigiously, and then a turn or two up and down the Turkey carpet. Heniker watched him, feeling sure that

there was more to come, and that what was to come was more important. And evidently it was. The Duke returned to the fire, and spoke with studious detachment, which in itself was significant. "There's another thing you can do while you're at it. You'll use your discretion. There's no valid reason that I can see against her coming back to England. She's a widow as well as a wife; she can make herself doubly a wife if she sets so much store by the Church as all that comes to—and I don't say she's wrong in that, mind you. I'd let a woman go to church with a man once a week, so long as it was the same man, if it helped her to bear with him and his airy ideas." Here the Duke blinked, then cleared his throat, stiffened himself, and said, "Damme, she ought to come home. She don't know how much her friends want to see her again."

Heniker began to perceive—though he couldn't articulate his vision—that his part was to be more diplomatic than legal. It was probable that, to do his business efficiently, he must urge pity for this very unpitiable great man. Here he was, master of England, sufficient unto himself if ever man was, and asserting sufficiency in every line of his upright body, and in every dry phrase of his upright mind—and yet, even Roger could see, he wanted this lady to complete his well-being.

Roger, after waiting a moment for the Duke to continue, said, "I'll go, my Lord, as soon as may be. If your Grace will let me see Mr. Lancelot's will, and the marriage-settlement, I shall be obliged."

"You shall have 'em," the Duke said. "As for your starting, take your time. You've plenty. But it's apt to be hot there towards the end of May. I was out there in June, when she—"; but he didn't finish the phrase. He had been remembering it was in June that she had left Lancelot and him alone in a great castle in the woods, had joined Poore, her lover, and fled with him no farther than Rapallo. There the pair of them had awaited the two gentlemen, and there Poore had confronted them and their pistols and routed them without a shot fired. The Duke was not likely to have forgotten that, but never spoke of it except to himself. He had forgotten at this moment that he wasn't alone.

Heniker hastened to assure his Grace that he should be off long before the end of May. He had one or two Bendish matters to put through. The Coronation claim was one; but that was as good as done. He thought that he should certainly be ready in a month. The Duke nodded once or twice.

"That's excellent. I'll write to her to-day to announce you, and you shall take letters from me. Now I needn't keep you any longer. Ask for my secretary as you go out, and he'll give you everything you want. Good morning."

He had pulled the bell and was by now answered. "Take this gentleman to Mr. Shorthope," was the order. Two more friendly nods, Roger was out of the room, and himself again at his standing desk.

A few days after this interview, perhaps a week,

it so happened that the name of Poore cropped up at a dinner-party given by Lord Bendish, at which Roger was present with some literary celebrities. Mr. Hunt and Mr. Moore were capping verses across the table—Bendish sitting glum to his port, as he was apt to do when the verses were not his verses. Hunt had cried up to the skies the graphic power of his poor friend Keats in the line—

So the two brothers and their murdered man,

used of a man whose doom was fixed, but the stroke not yet fallen.

Moore had chirrupped agreement. "I can't beat it, Mr. Hunt—it would puzzle even our noble friend here to beat it. But that word *murdered*, let me tell you, drips with horror, wets you with the clammy stuff of its own force. Now do you remember the pome of me friend Poore—poor Gervase Poore, the impetuous lover—? 'Tis a classical piece where he's talking of the red Gods of the time before Olympus was made golden by Vulcan, and he recalls 'em and their tragedy in a line—

Kronos, and Gê, and murdered Ouranos.

'Tis a proof of what I'm saying. How now, Bendish?" He turned to his moody host, who gloomed upon him, and presently said, "I've read Poore. If he knew more he'd write less. But he's not a dunce."

Hunt subscribed to that. "Not he, my lord. He's a white heat, who turns his learning into ash the minute he has it, and roars for more."

Bendish lifted his eyebrows: "A volcanic bard!"

"An apostle!" cried Hunt. "He will lift and carry the fiery cross." Bendish frowned. He had his own ideas at this moment about fiery crosses; and one couldn't have two apostles at the same time in England. The country's too small for it. So he frowned, and then showed himself supercilious.

"Whither, my good Hunt?" Mr. Moore, always tactful, cut in on a slant.

"He made me poor friend Lancelot blench before it—his white heat—not so long ago," he said. "Did your lordship ever meet the Lancelots? Hardly. They were in the enemy's camp. Wake House was their citadel." Bendish tossed his fine head. He considered the Duke as his only serious rival for the headship of Britain. But Moore ran on. "She was a lovely woman, upon my soul. Like a wisp of rosy cloud, a scarf upon the blue. But the ether shows no such blue over Britain as her fine pair of eyes. Now the Duke, saving your lordship's presence (who like him not), was her first conquest, but Gervase was her second, and 'twas he that led captivity captive. Begad, he got her, and has her yet. 'Tis a strenuous poet."

Heniker, happening to catch the eye of the speaker, allowed himself to ask, What part the husband had played in this affair? Mr. Moore flacked his fingers at the dead Lancelot.

“A shadowy third, me dear sir, a skeleton at the feast. He grew unsubstantial under me very eyes, from the very first a shawl-bearer, the poor man, he hovered in the background. He looked always in the glass of his mind and saw himself there the suffering gentleman. That pleased him so much that I doubt he forgot his sufferings in satisfied contemplation. He had no chance with the Duke—nor, if you’ll believe me, gentlemen, the Duke with Gervase. Gervase was, let me say, the most male of the three. Nature favours the male, being herself of the other sex, we believe. Now they tell me that Lancelot when he died left her a little plum, and so the way’s clear for her to come home. There’s one great man not a mile from Wake House will be glad to see her. But will she come? What will Gervase say to ut? If *he* will, well and good! Then she comes, you may be sure. Nature, me dear sir, favours the male.”

“And you also, Tom Moore,” said Mr. Hunt, beaming upon him. “All my feelings are with the lady, whom I am inclined to pity. A man may be too much of a male—and a poet should not be.”

“You may spare your pity, me good Hunt,” Moore said warmly. “Me friends the Poores are, I believe, as snug as fish in the sea. And how would you have a poet hermaphrodite? A sonnet to her eyebrow’s well enough, or an epithalamy at the door. But there’s a wilder music for a married pair. And me friend’s the boy for the chune—or I mistake him.”

Bendish was listening closely, though all his effort

was to seem uninterested. "You believe in him, Tom?" Moore's black eyes stared.

"Believe in him!" he cried. "Why, I love him!" He delighted his friend Hunt.

"Tom, you are priceless. I never heard a worse reason for believing in a man, nor, by Heaven, a better. It's the case with me too."

"We'll toast him and his fair lady together." He lifted his glass. "To the Poet and Nausithoë!" It was drunk, but Bendish just touched the rim of his glass and put it down. There was a good deal for him to consider in all this. A Poet—a pretty woman—and himself. Here he was, you see, with his foot on the ladder, about to start upwards—and to be told that he might expect to find a white-hot Poet upon an upper rung, with a pretty woman under his arm whom he had taken away from husband and lover—that lover the Duke! All this was as serious as you please.

Hunt began upon politics after this, speculating how long the Duke would hold out, or the country endure the spectacle of millions of men held back by one hand in a white buckskin glove. In its way it was a fine spectacle, he said. Bonaparte had dragooned a nation, led it headlong to victory, drawn it orderly out of defeat—but he had worked with the apparatus of kingship. Eagles had rocked and tossed before his men's eyes, songs had inflamed their hearts; purple and ermine, the Pope and the Sacrament had lent their magic. But the Duke stood up in a blue surtout, a cool elderly country

gentleman—and marching myriads stood still. A fine sight; but if there was blood left in England it should boil to behold it.

Moore said, "Gervase's would boil were he here." Then Lord Bendish rose up.

"The poet is a poor hand with the sword——"

"There was Sophocles," Mr. Hunt observed, and annoyed his host.

"We don't know, I fancy, very much about the sword-play of Sophocles. A man must be born to lead. Mirabeau had the habit of command; Lafayette had it."

"Devizes has it," said Heniker, and Bendish looked hard at him.

"We'll find him a Mirabeau one of these days, my dear fellow," he said. "Shall we go upstairs?" They did, but found their host take a fit of silence and gloom, which not even Tom Moore could break through. Bendish was considering what steps were necessary in order to wipe the Duke of Devizes out of his political path—and Gervase Poore out of his poetical. He felt that he could not call his soul his own until something decisive had been done in the business.

CHAPTER VII

THE MANTLE OF MIRABEAU

ARDOUR and Ambition were partners in the mind of young Lord Bendish, and worked well for him in the main; but there was this queer defect in the picture which they made for him, that they showed him to himself passive, not active; receiving homage, not compelling it. They overleaped themselves; they took his merits for granted, and showed him England, or Europe, acknowledging them with acclaim. In all the moving scenes, then, which he called up at whim or upon some chance suggestion from outside, one was always omitted—that which showed him procuring the triumphs of the rest. He saw himself reading his poem, being hailed as chief of poets, crowned with laurels and the rest—but not writing the glorious work. He was drinking adoration from a woman's eyes, but not compelling it there. He was chosen leader of hosts, but not a candidate. The peers sat spellbound when he resumed his seat, or the thunder of acknowledgment broke about him like a storm after a moment of solemn hush; but he never heard the speech which induced such ovation, nor felt himself make it. That he took for granted. You see, his was a san-

guine temperament. It raced to the mark, and once there, saw itself the winner with perfect clearness.

When he had first projected the audacious *Billiad*, he had seen exactly how he would bear himself in the moment of success, how calmly he would face the irritation of men, how generously the open-eyed approbation of women. All the clue he had had to the detail of his hardy satire had been picked up from the faces of the scourged, and from his own beholding them—but these had been as clear before him as the face of day. He had argued cause from effect. So he had gone to work, and on the whole had succeeded in pleasing himself. His reception had been happy—it tallied with the dream.

This sort of thing a man may do a dozen times, if he happen to be right in his reading of the effect. This will depend upon whether he knows the world with which he works. Now smarting men and tributary women were familiar denizens of Bendish's world; but he had no experience of men indifferent. When, therefore, he began to meditate his maiden speech in the House of Lords he worked by his usual methods in a world unfamiliar. The result was a cold bath.

He saw in his golden forecast the House cool and undemonstrative, but keenly interested. He saw himself sit down in the midst of a low murmur of sound; he was surprised (in his day-dream) at his own lack of emotion. He knew himself a cool hand—but had thought that this might stir him. He noticed how careful he was to keep his eyes away from

galleries—to ignore the galleries altogether—where plumed heads bent to each other, and white shoulders shifted, and handkerchiefs fluttered, but in vain. He saw the Duke of Devizes take snuff and rise to answer him; he heard him rasp, guessed him put out. He heard the warm commendations of Lord Grey, and acknowledged them afterwards in the lobby with just that mixture of self-respect and courtesy which the honour demanded even of himself. From these glowing visions he harked back to the speech he intended to make—the speech of the author of *The Billiad* to the victims of it, whose grudging admiration he was destined to compel. He worked at it with ardour, and took great pains, denying himself to the world for a week or two. Nobody of importance was in his secret; when Bendish was deliberate, he was very close.

But he confided in Heniker, who was of no importance, partly for that reason and partly because he really had an affection for him. Heniker, calling with leases to sign, found him immersed in books. Bendish got up to receive him and pushed them away from him with impatience.

“Pouf! My good fellow, you come apropos. I’ve been stuffing myself with wind. Please to blow some of it out of me.”

“What’s all this?” Roger asked, handling a volume. “Demosthenes? Are you moulding your taste?”

“Cleansing my palate, I hope,” said Bendish. “That old boy has an astringent quality. He’ll do

me good. You know, Roger, I sicken of the world very soon. It doesn't suit me."

"Well," Roger said, "you don't stint yourself."

"No, no—of course you're right, and of course I overstep the bounds. But it amuses me—I can't afford *ennui*. That maddens. But one is aware, at one's wildest, just how much applause is worth. One can always get back. I give you my word, I've not dined out of these rooms for ten days. Nor have I had a man in since you were here with our two poets-about-town. By the by, what did you think about the poet Poore? Did it strike you that they pitched him rather high? I've been turning him over since."

"I don't read poetry," Roger admitted. "But he seems to have had a way with him." Bendish was thoughtful.

"You mean that he faced old Devizes? Yes, he did—in the boudoir. But what could the fellow do in the open? There's nothing here, you know, to tell one." He rapped a thin green volume, picked it up and let it drop again without looking at it. "Liberty and Equality are very fine things. You may write of them or abstract a man's mistress in their name. But can you lead men towards them? Can you reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment by means of them? Ah, my good fellow, the test is there. You must deal publicly with public things." Once more he picked up the green book and shook it in the air. "Do you think there's the sign of a tribune in *Nausithoë and Other Poems*?

There's neither Cleon nor Themistocles. I had his *Roland* sent me—I picked that over, too. Oh, Poore had force, I grant you. But—" He shrugged Poore away. "The times want a leader." He straightened himself and looked at his friend. "The times must be obliged."

He went on after a short silence. "How does Lord Grey strike you? You are a reformer, of course, and so is he. But does he inspire you? Burdett too, and his mob. He's at the head of them, I grant you. But so's the pig you drive to market. Clanranald might have done more. All his fire seems to have gone out since he became a peer. Whom else have we? Cobbett—pooh, the man's a boor. S——? D——? old N——? Oh, my dear fellow, we can't get on at this rate. . . . I thought that one might whip a spirit into 'em,—but it seems the brine is not made which will sting their hides. Another way of blowing up a house is from within. Well, we shall see. . . ."

Heniker gathered from all this, and a good deal more, what was in the wind. It was no business of his, however, and he thought little about it, little knowing what the upshot was to be, or how it would touch his private affairs.

There was a motion before their lordships' house fixed for a certain day, a motion of Lord S——'s to "inquire into the State of the Nation," which that amiable enthusiast produced every year, and had solemnly debated and rejected. It was always

treated with the utmost parade of seriousness by both sides of the House, and meant precisely nothing at all. Into this sea of pretence Lord Bendish, desperately in earnest, plunged with a resounding smack; among its canvas waves he wallowed; and finally he emerged as dry as he went in, tumbled and somewhat dirty. It should have been a sobering experience for him, but he was bitterly mortified. The fact was that nobody took any notice; his fiery periods, which had been fierier if they had been less rhetorical, worked, with all the rest, into the dreary decorum of the afternoon. The Duke was in his place, reading and writing notes; Lord Grey chatted with a noble friend behind him, sprawling over the back of his bench. When the time came each of these great men rose in his place and murmured a few polite and perfunctory phrases. The noble Earl did, it is true, refer to Bendish, as "the noble lord, new to your lordships' house, whose eloquence and erudition, joined as these are to enthusiasm for the liberty and enhancement of mankind, cannot have failed to impress your lordships with his sincerity"; but the Duke said nothing about Bendish at all. His point—his only point—was that the State of the Nation was as good as could be expected under present circumstances, and would be very much better if amiable philosophers would leave it alone. The Nation, it was his opinion, desired mainly to mind its business, which was buying and selling. It was, he suggested to their lordships, a case of too many doctors. The patient was expected to put his tongue

out twice an hour, when once a year would be better. He was aware that the noble Earl who had moved the House only called himself in precisely once a year; but there were other and more diligent practitioners than he. For this reason, if for no better, he should vote as usual, against the motion.

One or two other noble lords spoke, but languidly, and the debate guttered out like a spent candle. Nothing at all about rick-burnings, machine-smashings, and such bubblings of muddy pools. Not even Bendish, new as he was to oratory, had ventured to hint at the starving plough-hands. He had confined himself to reform, and had been deliberately academic upon that topic. He had had an inward prompting to let himself go—to be bitter, to be caustic, to open his cloak for a moment and let their lordships see the gleaming of the fiery cross. But his heart had failed him. Really—to these yawning, blinking, stale men-about-town! No—this was a case for Demosthenes, not Cleon. And so he went on, and had his cold bath. The animated presence of ladies in the gallery aggravated the impassivity of their lordships. Lord S—— told him afterwards that he was over their heads. “They don’t like a man to talk about Amurath and Solyman and the Tyrants of Syracuse. They like to be fairly sure beforehand what you’re going to say. Look at me, you know. They know me by heart, and are always glad to see me. Within reason I say just what I like. And so can you; but pray don’t think that you’ll draw them by strong language. They’ll sit as mum as fishes,

and draw *you*. I don't think the Duke ever answers anybody but Grey. It's not worth his while, you understand. He's a busy man, and I'm very idle. But I hope I keep the cause moving—I hope I do." Bendish left the House without further ado, and kept to his own for some days. Failure infuriated him, and he felt that he had failed badly.

He was very acute, and quite candid with himself. He had failed because he had tried for too high a mark. He had tried to lift with him a dead weight. He turned cold to think that he had very nearly made a fool of himself by taking seriously what was the merest routine. His face—he was alone at the time—was white and wild, his eyes were round and tragic as he realised the narrow escape he had had. Then, as was always the case with him, his fancy began to torment him into a fury, first with himself, next with the men who had put him in this plight. He disdained his order, he was shocked at their cynicism, he vowed the destruction of such a monstrous display of sneering privilege. For the first time in his life, it is probable, he felt with the sweating and dragooned millions whom he had just professed himself in Ciceronian periods ready to lead.

He raged, mute and white. He knew himself able, exorbitant in his claim upon fate and his generation and the generation after it. Yet he knew also that no tribute of earthly powers could possibly satisfy him. If the King and Princes of the Blood, with the ministers and two archbishops, were to

kneel in St. James's Street and fall upon their faces when he appeared, he would spurn them and go his way, looking for more absolute honour. But even these poor silly things had not occurred. Far from it, he reflected with a shiver that he had been stripped—since in a case like his to withhold was to take away—and it might well be that he would soon be beating the bushes of the world looking for a hospitable—he meant flattering—pair of eyes.

Flattery enough he could have had, from women, but in such an hour as this he abhorred their shallow enthusiasm. They looked at you, these pretty, plumed, bare-necked women, with eyes set wide for any chance newcomer more worship-worthy than yourself. They focussed about you, not upon you. Now the tribute of a woman, to be worth anything, must be without stint. If you are not the centre of her world you were better nothing at all. Bendish would have none of them. He had made a bid for absolute power and it had been refused him. Good. He would bide his time, which no doubt would come, in its time.

He kept to his rooms, denied the door to every comer, opened no letters, wrote none, and lived chiefly upon soda water, tobacco, and the works of Voltaire. For a week he was comforted, and then nature had its way with the young man. A vision, an apprehension rather, for touch seemed to mingle with sight to make it palpable, stole upon him in the pauses of the night, and thereafter grew in intensity till he gave way to it. The vision was of a

tall, swaying and glowing girl whose ardour was fanned by his own into a delicately leaping fire. Again he dreamed achievement rather than promise. He saw her veiled eyes, he saw her averted head. Sweet distress to be so desired made her humble. His arms were about her, soon her lips were his. She cast herself with a sob upon his breast, she confessed him king and lord. By heaven, but such a tribute from a virgin heart was worth all the acclamation of the world. And it was his to pick up by mere stooping for it.

He rang the bell and was answered by discreet Mackintosh. He ordered a horse to be round immediately, a groom in attendance. In half an hour he was pounding the North Road in the gathering dusk of a spring day. In an hour and a half he had Rose Pierson in his arms, sobbing upon his breast.

CHAPTER VIII

DISTRACTION OFFERS

BENDISH could be a great lover—for he was at once ardent and imaginative; his natural fire kindled his fancy, and his fancy could play with his fire so long as he saw himself stooping splendidly. His books of reference were the lady's looks, and most of the work must be hers. The woman to keep him would have to be perpetually on all fours, perpetually needing benefit and perpetually adoring him for bestowing it. If you can find a woman so quadrupedalian as that all may be well. But if you have to put her there before you can make your splendid beneficent stoop, you must be careful lest the mechanism of the thing become obvious even to yourself. And you may happen to strike upon a lady who doesn't care to be repeatedly plumped into the mire in order to be raised splendidly to your level. A natural groveller is your only real chance of happiness—and there aren't too many of them.

Rose Pierson was a proud girl by nature, but by circumstance had been forced to keep her pride in her pocket. She was also an intelligent girl who knew her betters when she saw them. Long before

Bendish had declared himself a lord she had been aware of his lordliness, and it hadn't needed the tinge of urbane condescension upon his dealings with her to make her feel the lift to her feet. She had very likely been flattered into love. Bendish had talked to her very unaffectedly in the beginning of their acquaintance, for his temperament, I say again, was ardent and his tastes naturally good. He had talked poetry, he had read it to her—and not only his own by any means. He had read her Petrarch, and guided her timid tongue over the sugary stuff; he had read her Tasso, the *Pastor Fido*; Shakespeare, Milton, *The Faerie Queen*, and the "Hymn to Beauty." Then there had been his own things—"To Rose, with a book," "To Rose, with a rose" and so on: very pretty indeed. All this reading and imagining had very simply led to love-making. It is a short step from talking love to acting it. Rose was flattered, and then moved; once moved, she was immovable. She had a constant mind, and now her pride, being enlarged, took possession of it. Constancy became a standing order and a point of honour too. Whatever her noble lover might do with her, there was one thing, she vowed, he should never do, and that was kill her love. He had told her of the state of his heart before he revealed his rank. She was not at all blinded by the new glory, because she was prepared for it. That dismayed him a little; that cooled him. He had, I think, expected her to souse down again on all fours into the mud; but she had sim-

ply bowed her head and then lifted it again, that she might show him faith and honour in her eyes. "If you were the King," she had said, "I couldn't love you any more." He had clasped her to his heart; but he had not picked her up, because she wasn't down.

When he left Myrtle Cottage for the mansions of Mayfair (with *The Billiad* on every boudoir table, and a castigated husband pacing every other library carpet), she had gone tearless about her humdrum business and kept her head very high. He never wrote to her, and she couldn't write to him, or thought that she couldn't. As time went on she suffered; and then came Heniker's kindness and broke down her defences. But she never wavered, or lowered the flag; and when at last he came back to her she was able to offer herself to him breast to breast, as the equal which he had made her. "Oh, my lover, my lover, I knew that you would come," she had said in his ear, clinging to him, her face hidden. By no means on all-fours, you see. Far from it, she was high in the air. He had justified her proud beliefs, and she credited him with a share of her own glory. She made much of him; her eyes and lips and thrilling tones betrayed how much; and the more she made of him on these terms the less he liked it.

Not thus does a hound at fault pick up the scent. This is the way to chop foxes. Bendish had been moved to return to Rose by two instincts: there was the instinct of disgust at a stale old planet jog-

trotting round its everlasting sun, attended by its everlasting satellites. This figure may stand for the House of Lords, perhaps, parading about the kingdom, with its futile Greys and Devizes trailing after it. Round and round they go, so chained to the blessed routine that they never heed the dashing meteor out of space that comes rocketing into them. Not at all; a shake of the head, a wag of the blinkers, and on they go. Let us slant off in a hurry to that Island of the Blest, Cythera, and forget this hideous mill of a world. That was one instinct—the revolt of stinging blood against pack-horseism. The other was the imperious need he felt to restore himself to himself, to recognise his power again, to reshape his ambitions, to get in touch once more with magnanimity. He must get back to mew and sit there awhile, his burning eyes fixed upon the sun and the far blue realms of his dominion. And where so fit a perch for him as the humble heart of Rose?

All very well—but Rose was no longer humble, but proud with the pride he had taught her, and received him (very nearly) as an equal. He had been almost ludicrously dismayed. The romantic rapture of his galloping return, of their meeting in the scented dusk, of her warm-breathed beauty, her clinging and her glad tears, lasted him just long enough to uphold the proper note. They burned together for an hour or so, and then she bade him go from her. “Come back to me when you will,” she said. “You will find me here. But

you must ask for Aunt Welbore, not for me. I shall tell her that you have been here, of course."

Pack-horseism in Cythera! He couldn't have that, but clasped her to his heart. "Love knows nothing of aunts and uncles, my beloved. Love sees the world as a flowery glade—with two persons in it, the Lover and the Loved."

She smiled at him, gentle as a mother might be gentle, pitying her child. "I know how these forms must irk you," she said, "but, dearest, they keep me from the cold. Oh!" and she clung to him, "I shall wait upon your leisure. I know that you have your part in great affairs—I know that my lord is a lord of the world." He liked that. Then she told him that she had read of his speech in the House; and that he didn't like at all, knowing well that he had hit the wrong note, and hit it too hard. He fumed inwardly, and needed no urging to be gone. As he rode home through the dark he told himself that that pretty bubble was pricked and frittered into air. He tried to be cynical about it; but he was too young to find that any comfort. He felt lonely.

He was now alarmed about himself. All his supports seemed cut away. Poetry, Politics, Love—Women, mind, ambition—all gone! The world was but a conglomerate of bubbles; you prick one and the whole filmy mass vanishes. He must travel—he must see peoples and lands. He would go East, where you get Passion and Reality, where you see Passions as men walking, without a stitch to cover

them—naked and fierce as they were born. Among them he would stalk, as a man among men, with them wrestle for a throw; triumphing there, he would pick up his chosen bride and lift her to his saddle-bow. Then away with her into the hills, into the silence and solitude of nature, where only the soaring eagle is co-tenant, and wed her there in some rock-bound glade within sound of the thunder of the cataract. *Et Venus in silvis*. . . .! Elemental life for the man who feels the elements heave within him for utterance, like the fiery gas in the womb of the volcano. Here he became himself again, youth being quick to the rebound. Bendish past the remnant of the night in a fever of unrest, and so was found at ten o'clock in the morning by his henchman Heniker, come to report the progress of the Coronation claim.

Coronation claims—with eagles above the solitudes!

Bendish, bright-eyed and pale, scoffed at him.

“But, my good Roger, all this is damned foolishness. ‘The Lord Bendish claims to walk as a peer among his peers. . . .!’ Great God, man, let me tell you once for all that George Bendish claims to walk as a man among free men. That claim, it seems, is to be questioned! That’s a thing no man in England must claim. Oh, have done with such dreary quackery! You make me ashamed that I stand upright on two legs—with two legs beneath me and the well-worn stump of a tail. Who bit that off for me? The doctor? the midwife? Pooh,

sir, I come of a fighting stock. The thing went—rubbed away—before we had our backs to the wall and held our own against kings and robber-barons. A peer among his peers. . . .! My good Roger, I tell you flatly I don't know what you're talking about." The probabilities are that, at the moment, he really didn't.

The patient Heniker grinned, but said nothing. Bendish paced the room with rapid strides, leaping from cabbage to cabbage upon the carpet as if he were crossing a torrent upon the scattered rocks in its bed. "I tell you that I sicken of this fenced island—this kitchen-garden within sea-walls. Roger, I'm for the open, and invite you to tread with me. We'll cross Spain on horseback—see them kill bulls at Madrid, learn to play the guitar at Seville, unveil women at Granada, and shake Europe off our footsoles at Gibraltar. Then for the gorgeous East—Albania, Athens, Byzantium, Bagdad, Damascus. In Syria we may find ourselves among our equals. The desert should breed men. I, at any rate, have made up my mind. I'll be no longer a plant in this conservatory, syringed with warm water by old Devizes and his men. There's dry rot in the benches and mildew in the green stuff. The close fetid air makes me sick. Pah! I tell you I want to breathe!"

Heniker looked at his papers with some concern. "It's as you please, of course. I can only tell you that I've given a deal of work to this thing—and I should have been glad to have known earlier that

you—were thinking no more about it. I suppose it had better go through now. In fact, it is as good as through the Committee.”

Bendish chafed. “If a man’s sincere impulse towards honesty is to be stayed by a Committee for Privileges—! Roger, we are talking of different things. I am talking about life and you about—privileges.”

“You forget,” Heniker said, “that I get my living that way. However, you needn’t be troubled any more. I suppose you’ll exercise your rights on the great day.”

“Are you speaking of the Day of Judgment, my friend?” Bendish asked severely.

Heniker met him with blandness. “The Coronation, my dear Bendish, was in my mind. But you may not be at home, it seems—and in fact I hardly think that I shall be here either. I have to go abroad almost at once.”

Bendish cheered. “Hurrah, Roger! We’ll go together. Leave it all to me. How soon can you be ready?”

Roger smiled. “Syria is too far, and I’ve no time for the ladies of Granada. My lady of the moment lives at Rapallo.”

“Italy!” cried Bendish. “By God, we’ll go to Italy. There were men in Rome once. But—you are after a lady?” He puzzled. “Who the devil’s your lady?”

Roger told him. “She’s only mine in business terms. She’s married fast enough this time. You’ll

know her name I don't doubt. She is Mrs. Poore, and was once Mrs. Lancelot. I'm to see her about her first husband's will."

Bendish was highly and immediately interested. He had had Mr. Poore in his mind ever since his dinner-party when two poet-reformers had laid stress upon the man's powers. Poore had been a possible rival. Poore was to be reckoned with. He admitted to himself that he had forgotten Poore for the moment. Now, however, his mind was made up.

"I believe I'll see her too—and her master. They said great things of Poore, you remember? I'd like to meet him. I believe we might get on. There are things to be done with England—even now! Let it be Italy by all means. I can go on to the East afterwards, by way of Venice, unless Poore and I strike a partnership of insurrection. I should say that was much on the cards. When Greek meets Greek! Or steel strikes on steel—hey, Roger? Well, I'm ready. I could start in half an hour—if you're of that mind."

Heniker, his mind flashing about over his own affairs, felt that he'd much rather have Bendish with him, than leave him in England. He had no notion of his recent dashing exploit at Golder's Green, since he had not been there himself, nor been able to see his lady in town. He believed that all was well in that quarter; but with Bendish you could never tell. The fellow veered like a weathercock! Any sudden whim might send him dashing down there, to carry his sweet Rose by

storm. He pondered the proposal for a moment, but his mind was really made up.

"If you wish to join me, George, I shall be very happy in your company, I don't doubt," he said, "but you must understand that I'm one of your pack-horses. No loitering in Spain for me. I shall go by Paris to Marseilles and then on. I shall go post, since I'm told that money is no difficulty."

He awoke the lord in the child of nature.

"Post!" cried Bendish with scorn. "By Heaven, you'll do nothing of the sort. I shall take my carriage, of course. Now, my dear Roger, leave all this to me. Believe me, I know the way to travel. All I shall ask of you, or your father, is the where-withal. See to it, will you? that the bankers be warmed beforehand into civility. Whither away now? Paris, Marseilles, Turin, Milan, Florence, Rome, Venice? That will do for the present. Just see to all this, there's a good fellow. And we start to-day week. Is that understood? Good. Now you can leave me to myself, if you will. I believe I shall go to bed. Thirty-six hours is a good day. *Au revoir*, my dear Roger."

He did not go to bed, however. He was much too happy. Action was what he needed. Entirely recovered, he sallied forth to dine, to talk high, to play deep, to revel. Great with idea, there was nothing he could not do, and do supremely well. At two in the morning, returned from Crockford's, he laid the scheme of a great travel poem in six books, and found himself so fertile that much of

it was on paper before he was sure of his route. A motive was a-wanting. Could that be Rose? Or the siren Lady O——? Or perhaps Lady Ann, too chaste for his hero? The sketch here was hazy. Quite possibly a motive would declare itself *en route*. Meantime Nature and the works of Man were to be dressed in a fine melancholy. He was certified of that by his lively Muse before he went to bed that morning—which he did nearly at the hour when Rose at her window looked out to greet the sun and pray for her lover.

CHAPTER IX

HOW NOT TO LEAVE A MISTRESS

THE fortnight—for it took the full of that—between decision and departure was full of comfort to Lord Bendish, who could only gauge his own happiness by the unhappiness of his friends. He flew now from house to house taking intense farewells. Every house which he left contained at least one tear-dimmed lady. The burden of his exile—for he put it at that—was felt to be her burden, all the more grievous in that he invariably spoke more in sorrow than in anger. “Fret not for me,” said Bendish—or he implied it; “I do but fulfil my destiny—that of a man born a rebel. The powers of this world triumph for a time. Every self-interest is concerned to hound me out. The voice of truth must be smothered. But you and I know that we dare not palter with the truth. You would not have me otherwise—and I, my dear one, could not love you so much did I think that you would see me deny truth for the sake of our temporal bliss. I go, I go, carrying in my heart enshrined the memory of one noble woman. To you I leave, as consecration of your years of solitude, the vows of an inflexibly honest man—a small, clear flame for the

altar of your heart. Tend it anxiously for my sake—and be sure of my service of our love. I am henceforth the high priest of Memory. Adieu! adieu!”

There were tears, kisses; generally a lock of hair was his. He received it with sad satisfaction, and bestowed it safely, after (at least) a twelve hours' carriage upon his person, into a drawer in his cabinet. There it joined a pretty numerous *harem*.

With men he took another line of discourse. This accursed country was still at the bottom of it, but on a more physical side. As he put it, its fogs intercepted your breath, its government your letters, its husbands your flirtations. You couldn't eat its dinners, kiss its wives, write its poems, get its votes. A handful of peers and fox-hunters ruled its counsels, a few raddled old women set its fashions, and a couple of magazines dictated its taste. Be damned to oligarchy, he was for individuality. A man should be worth the length of his arm, or his head; Bendish didn't care which it was—he would accept battle with anybody, and leave the choice of weapons to his antagonist. Here was he, for instance, in roaring youth, who had tried every diversion which the world had to offer to a man of reasonable parts: politics, literature, action, love; poetry, rhetoric, battle, adultery—take it how you will. They wouldn't have him, not because they didn't like him (for they did), but because they couldn't afford to disturb existing order. Let sleeping dogs lie, said they. Once you let in ideas, who knows

where they will go? What becomes of the *patriâ potestas*? What's the end of *Privilege*? Where's the King, Lords, and Commons? Where are the Forms of the House; where's the Sublime and the Beautiful? The Muses, pray! Here's Lord Bendish with a pair of scissors to cut their petticoats. Good God, if he ain't careful you may see their legs! These ladies, like the Queen of Spain, are understood to have none. Or take politics, he'll trouble you. A man who, with all his faults, sees things for what they are, goes down to the House of Lords for the first time in his life. What does he find? His Majesty's Ministers and his Majesty's ex-Ministers debating the State of the Nation. Very well; most proper subject of debate. He cuts in and describes that—as he sees it. With what result? Discomfort, disrelish, dismay, disgust on every side. What! this upstart (whose forefathers, let him say, in parenthesis, upstarted with the Conqueror) not only denies that all is well, but tells us that nothing can be well so long as we sit where we are! Assures us that in these days it won't do for a score of men to keep a score million marking time! Bids us count men, not acres, weigh brains and not breeches' pockets! Back to school with him; he's not had enough of the birch. Don't answer the fellow; pretend he isn't there. H'm, h'm—where are we! Ah, to be sure. "His Majesty's Ministers, secure in the confidence of a beloved, because temperate, monarch. . . ." Well, personally, he, Bendish, felt that it was a case of one thing or another for him.

One stifled in England. Either you must open the windows, or you must go outdoors. England declined the first; remained the second. This was how he put it, with great vivacity. It was hard to see how he could have a better fortnight in any land or under any conditions of life.

His humble, but very necessary friend Heniker spent his fortnight differently. He had to pacify the creditors, the mother, and one of the victims of this brilliant young man. None of these were easy matters, and one of them touched him nearly. We may leave out of account the Jews, the discounters, the tailors, carriage-builders, jewellers, and dependents of the Bendish name; we may touch lightly upon the smouldering gloom and ominous seismics of Mrs. Bendish, and even upon her ultimate eruption in storm—a storm so shattering that Heniker felt himself a nameless outcast for four-and-twenty hours after it and complained of pains in the head. Poor Mrs. Bendish; her rage knew no bounds because every other faculty of hers was in rigid confinement. She could do nothing. She had no money, nor authority to raise any. She never saw her son, and never had her letters answered. She had the power of dying, and before very long exercised it; meantime she sheathed her claws in Heniker's respectable flesh and felt a momentary relief. It is his other task which concerns me. He had to learn from the girl of his heart that Bendish had been with her again; to see her own heart bleeding and to staunch the flow. These

things he suffered and did with an honesty which is much to his credit.

The occasion was that of the second confession of his feelings to Rose, which he made because he was leaving her for two months certain. This time he was fortified by Mrs. Welbore's good opinions and offices. This worthy woman was now clearly on his side, had invited him to her house and pointedly left him alone with her niece. The tall young girl stood dreaming by the window, dreaming, you might say, defiantly, for she knew very well what she had to face. So she remained while Roger spoke to her of his departure and of his feelings at leaving her. She listened, though she continued to gaze and had dreams in her eyes. She smiled gently, but she shook her head in answer to his prayer for hope. "I can only say what I said before. You are more than kind. It is true that my thoughts will go with you."

"Ah," said the young man ruefully, "but I'm afraid they will be for my companion."

She did not deny it. "I shall never think of you without kindness," she said. "But you know what is the matter with me."

He nodded three or four times. "I have never liked to speak to you of—of Lord Bendish. I felt a delicacy. But—forgive me—I didn't think that you could have seen much of him lately."

She kept her eyes fixed at gaze. "He came to see me the other day. He asked me, did I care for him still? He need not. He was answered before

he had finished. How can I help myself? He taught me to care." Her voice trailed. She seemed to have no lifting power.

Heniker cursed Bendish in his heart. But he could not deny help to the woman he loved. "You are steadfast, you have a noble heart. That is your honour, and your very grief is your reward—"

But she wouldn't have that. "No, no," she said, "it is not so. But I can't help myself."

He assented sadly. "He has a winning way with him. I can see how he would affect you. But—I think you ought to know—I feel bound to warn you—he is very changeable. He forgets, you see. He so delights in using his powers. He has so many powers, so much charm, so much spirit; he sees so many people——"

She held up her head. "I understand you. It is only to say that he is a person of consequence—by birth, by ability—and that I am a nobody——"

He stopped her. "I can't hear you say that. You are all the world to me. Your beauty and nobility of soul—no rank, no attainments can equal that. Any honest man in the world must be on his knees to you."

She rewarded him with a look where innocent vanity and compassion were tenderly mixed; but then she resumed her outward searching of the day. "I value your good opinion of me, and want to deserve it. You would think less of me if I was fickle because he is. You don't care for me less because I can't give you what you ask. I must

follow my heart, with my conscience. It may lead me to unhappiness—but at least I shan't have to reproach himself. Nor," she said with a full-orbed flash upon him, "nor will you reproach me."

He took a step forward, lifted her hand and kissed it. "Miss Pierson, I could never reproach you. I love you with all my soul."

He pleased her; even he saw that. Certainly she liked to be loved. The knowledge of his state of mind, and of his knowledge of her own, put her at her ease with him. It would be too much to say that she patronised him, for she was most gentle; but she had an almost matronly air. She would be his sister if he pleased, but quite clearly his elder sister. She was made older than he by her sufferings past and to come. So much he was obliged to see.

Meantime—chiefly desiring just now to distract her—he told her as much as he felt at liberty to tell of his mission. It was common knowledge, but not to her. His account of Mrs. Poore and her poet interested her while she was shocked by some of the details. She applauded them for refusing Mr. Lancelot's money, and hoped that they would hold out against Roger's pleading. "You know very well that you would not take such money yourself," she said.

He was not sure. "If, as I understand was the case," he urged, "Poore convinced Mr. Lancelot that it was he himself who had wronged the lady—wronged her himself first, and wronged her again

by putting her wrong with the world, I think it would be generous in the conqueror to accept reparation. What else could the poor man do but set her free? One more thing. He could enable her to live with decent comfort. Well, why should he not have that gratification?"

Rose was not convinced. "What does money mean to her? She has the man of her heart. Nothing in the world matters besides that. But—" She thought, frowning over the position. "She ought to have kept faith. I feel so sure about that."

"I am certain that you do," Roger said. "But nobody is like you. You can't expect me to think so."

At this moment of quiet intimacy both of them were startled by the sound of wheels. A thunder at the knocker confirmed their belief. In another moment Bendish burst into the room, went quickly to Rose and took her hand. He kissed it gallantly, then held it. "This is my farewell, my dear," he said. "We go abroad in two days' time." She looked at him without a word. Then he saw Heniker.

"Ha, Roger—you here? You will confirm me. I suppose there's nothing to prevent us. I should blow my brains out if I had another twelve hours of this doghole of a country. Forty-eight hours is my absolute limit of endurance. Think of it, Rose! My mother proposes to come to town. That were the last touch. I have written positively forbidding it. One must defend oneself. Roger, I must

say, you are very remiss. Why didn't you tell her that I had gone?"

Roger, anxious himself to be out of this, grinned. "She won't come, George. She's not well enough." He turned to Rose. "I'll bid you good-bye, Miss Pierson. And you shall wish me a good voyage."

Rose, blushing, disengaged her hand from her lover's and held it out to Heniker. "I wish you every good thing," she said, "you may be sure. Must you really go?"

One would hardly have credited Bendish with such obtuseness—to call it no worse—if one had not understood how entirely he was held by one idea at a time. The readiness of Heniker to leave the field to him actually annoyed him. He fidgeted during the little colloquy, and finally answered Rose himself. "Absurd! There can be no earthly reason. Give me ten minutes, give me five minutes, and I'll drive you back to town. I've a hundred things to say to you. Do you know that Pringle hasn't sent those guns yet? If he don't look out, the first use I make of one of 'em will be to blow out his brains. I'll get you to see him about it first thing in the morning."

Roger by the door said that he had booked his seat in the St. Albans coach, and was for making his escape. He was hot with rage on Rose's account; but Bendish was incredible.

"I daresay you have, my dear fellow, but I happen to wish to speak to you; so you must oblige me."

Roger went out without a word. He knew that

he must wait for the fellow, being his hireling. "G—d d—n him, oh, G—d d—n him!" He stood tense with rage, tapping his foot on the doorstep.

Meantime Bendish held Rose in his arms and kissed her. Her lips were cold, her eyes had no tears. "Farewell, my love," he said. "Wish me happy—"

She nodded her head, looking away from him.

"Wish me happy—and love me well. Too few do that." She couldn't speak to him. He held her closely, roused to stir her feelings—but soon gave over, conscious of failure, and sickened at it. It would have needed real fire in him to have moved her, and just now he had none whatever. "You'll not forget me, Rose?" he said rather faintly.

She said very quietly, "There is no chance of it," and then, as he looked at her, trying the power of his eyes upon her, she shivered and withdrew from his arm. "Please to go now," she said. "I beg you to go. You are distressing me."

That satisfied his self-esteem. "My dear, I obey you," he said. So they parted. He clattered downstairs and bustled Heniker into his phaeton. That miserable young man kept his eyes astrain towards the upper window, but without reward. Rose did not show herself. As far as Bendish was concerned, the place might have been an inn and she a chambermaid, the toy of a minute to spare.

Yet on the road to London he was in a mood of black despondency. He showed the butt of a

pistol shining in the mouth of a pocket. "There's my truest friend," he said. "I tell you that, Roger, having experienced every shift of fortune this world can offer. Wine, women, cards, dice; ambition, art, thought. Their limitations, or my own, make them worthless. There remains travel—to exchange one set of fools for another. I tell you, however, that I feel like a transported convict. . . ." He gloomed for a time, then eyed the pistol again. "My truest friend! Good God—and we live on!"

Presently he referred to Rose, and had poor Heniker's teeth on edge. "You'll hardly believe me, Roger, but I've left her dry-eyed—the only being in this world for whom I care a rap. But the greater fool I, you'll say, for giving my heart into the charge of a woman. Women! You'll hardly credit it, I daresay, but I've had them weeping about me every day for a week. I have ringlets enough for a Lord Chancellor's wig, and don't want 'em; and she—'wishes me well!' Good God, Roger, isn't it a desperate business when a man is ready to die for a cold-blooded mermaid of the sort? I swear that she's got a fish's tail. A clear ichor—amber-colour—flows in her veins. She asks me to leave her—says I distress her! She wishes me well! I shall get drunk to-night and go to Crockford's and drop perhaps a cool thousand. So she shall have her wish. Bah! And we live on!"

If Bendish lived on, it was by no desire of his family adviser's. Heniker, too, eyed the silver heel of the pistol-butt shining from the pocket of the cab.

CHAPTER X

TO RAPALLO

THE Duke's last words to Heniker were, "Get her to come home. Tell her that I'm old and lonely and at a raw edge. I have the acquaintance of all the world and not a friend in it. They hate me in the country, chiefly because I stick to business and don't deal in rhetoric. Don't say that I told you so. I can't afford to beg and be refused—that's my little weakness. She can't afford to grant it either: that would put her wrong with Poore, and I won't have that. Let it come from you. And of course she ought to have the money—and of course she won't." He had added as an afterthought, "So you take Lord Bendish? Ah! I shall like to know her opinion of that coxcomb. He's been fluttering the dove-cotes, I understand." Then he had given his messenger two fingers and turned to his affairs.

Upon that Roger had set out, in Bendish's traveling carriage, with Bendish himself, statue-faced and hag-ridden, in the mood of the moment, with three servants, two large dogs, and an eagle chained by the leg—but this last was left behind at Dover because the mood which demanded it had by that

time evaporated. Nothing disgusted Bendish so deeply as the sight of an old love. When that happened to be an eagle it didn't matter; but if it was a woman, as mostly it was, she suffered, so that he should not.

He remained in his marble gloom, speaking hardly a word, for two days. In Paris, however, his spirits rose, and he insisted upon a week's sight-seeing. He had no acquaintance in that city, and did not choose to inscribe his name at the Embassy, being in a mood of war with municipalities and powers; but he gave Heniker orders to see that his arrival was properly chronicled in *Galignani*. This brought a heterogeneous assembly into his anteroom and gratified him a good deal; he took on a literary mood, spent his days in gardens and his nights with poets and their loves. Heniker's assurance that he must go on, and should go alone, moved him. Bendish could stand anything but his own company in these early days.

So they travelled swiftly through central and into southern France, entered Savoy, and reached Rapallo, a little serried town, hanging like stonecrop to the rocks about a river. There they took up their quarters in the *pian' nobile* of a palace; horses were provided for his lordship's exercise, and Heniker sent on his credentials to the Villa Faesulana, where the poet Poore and his stolen bride were in lodging. Late in the afternoon of the day fixed in reply he walked up the steep path and penetrated the hedge of myrtle and dusty cypress which

hid the lower floors of a square, yellow, broad-eaved house from the few peasants and goat-herds who might pass it. The garden within was spacious and set out with order. A long flagged path led up between lemon trees in square tubs to the open doors of the house. A flight of steps midway took the ascent; the house stood on a terrace; geraniums and roses rioted over the stone balustrade. The place seemed empty, not a soul was to be seen. It was so quiet there that you could hear the flack-ing of a moth's wings in the cool darkness of the hall. Heniker pulled at the bell, and heard it clang in the distance.

A gray-haired peasant woman with careful patient face presently appeared. Heniker, being without Italian, smiled and mentioned the name of Mrs. Poore. She identified and nodded at it. "Si, si, si," she said in singsong, and added that the gentleman was expected, and that he would find the signori upstairs. "Studiano!" she said, and peered at him to see how he took it. "Studiano i libri—grandi così—" and she spread her arms out like a cross. All this was lost upon our friend, as she presently saw; so she shrugged him off with muttered comments on the follies of lovers, signed to him to enter, folded up her bleached old hands in her apron, and shuffled up the broad stair, he following.

A long tiled corridor was at the head of the stair. It stretched the whole depth of the house to a loggia at the back of it. Standing here, in response

to the grinning invitation of his old guide, who jerked her head and hand towards the far-off opening and said in a delighted whisper, "Vedi—i Signori," Heniker looked, and saw a pretty sight. In the level light of that evening hour two studious figures sat close together at a long table, a broad-shouldered man with his head thrown up, and a slim and slender woman. One of his arms rested the elbow on the table and the hand held open the page of a huge folio from which he was reading; the other arm was about his fellow-student. Her head touched his shoulder, her hand, lax at her side, played with a fan. Both were absorbed in the open book, and a sound of chanting, now high, now low, now fierce, now trailing, came from the man. The delighted old *serva* exhibited them like a peep-show. "Sempre lo stesso . . . scrivono la matina, leggono la sera. Eh, chè . . . !" Then she beckoned him forward the length of the long passage, and finally announced him as "quel' Signore a servirgli." The interrupted students sprang apart; both rose, and the man, covering the woman, faced Heniker. So might Adam and Eve have behaved, surprised in Eden by a son of God. Here was a tall, high-coloured, shock-headed young man with blue eyes and something of a scowl. He stood frowning his enquiries, without any words ready. From behind him there then appeared the slight form of his fellow-student, a slim, grave, and round-faced woman, hued like a morning rose, with very clear and direct gray eyes, as round, as open, and as

gray as Athena's own. Her manner was at once sedate and direct, as if she knew in a flash what was expected of her, and what she therefore must do, and do at once. It was she who, bowing formally, came to greet him with her hand. "I am Mrs. Poore," she said in clear tones; "and you must be Mr. Heniker. This is my husband." The tall young man bowed, but did not offer his hand.

Was this the face, this the lady, who had fled from duke's house and husband's bed, who had braved her world, and all Christian worlds, and fallen into the arms of love and poverty? Heniker thenceforth and for ever banished all the usual connotations of elopement and divorce from his reasonings of Mrs. Lancelot, as she had been. Here was no naughty lady. No unholy passion could contend with the pale fire upon those cheeks, no scandal sully eyes so bravely clear. To think of scandal and her, so possessed by limpid purpose, was absurd; but he judged her capable of enthusiasm, as burning keenly in a guarded shrine, and forthwith declared himself her knight. It does him much credit that he was able to discover the inner, spiritual beauty which made her bodily presence so fair a tenement of it, as if her form had yielded to moulding from within, and her colour of delicate fire was the shining through of her flame-like spirit, as if her flesh were of alabaster translucency. Report at home spake the Duke of Devizes as a gross and hardy lover; but if he loved this lady, Heniker thought, it must have been a matter of the head

informing the heart. He remembered now how the stoic old statesman had suffered a mellowing of the voice when he spoke of her.

Like all people who live engrossed in each other and their own affairs the Poores had little small talk, nothing to round off the edges of the business upon which Heniker had come. Poore himself had absolutely none. Heniker saw him look longingly at his enormous book more than once. Presently he turned about and sat on the parapet of the loggia with folded arms, looking down into the deepening gloom of the cypresses or up to the black mountains, over which, in a green sky, trembled the evening star. His wife spoke shyly of the journey, and then Roger took heart and commented upon her garden. She was pleased, and her eyes shone as she told him that they worked at it themselves. "Every morning from five to eight we work there," she said. "Then the sun comes over the hill and we have to go in."

Heniker laughed. "You put me to shame, and as for my fellow-traveller, I don't know what you will think of him. Your hour of leaving off work is usually his for going to bed."

She opened her eyes wide. "What does he do all night?" was her enquiry—rash in any one but she, who never thought evil of anybody.

"It is his time for reading or writing," Heniker said. "Fitfully, he's a great reader, and still more rarely a writer. He hopes to pay you his respects

under favour of a letter from friends of yours. Mr. Moore is one of them."

She flushed at a name which recalled London to her, but Poore caught the sound of it, turned, and looked straightly at the speaker. His eyes had a piercing power, as if they would read the mind. "Tom Moore? Do you know Tom Moore? He used to love me once."

"He does still," Heniker said, "but I wasn't speaking of my own acquaintance with him, which is almost none. It is my friend Lord Bendish who knows him, and has travelled out with me with a letter of Mr. Moore's in his pocket-book."

The poet considered this news. He frowned over the name; then his brows cleared. "I read Lord Bendish's poem,"—he turned to his wife, his voice noticeably gentle,—"Do you remember, Gina, I read it to you?"

She smiled at him with her eyes. He went on. "I thought it excellent. I envied him his good temper. He laughed at things which I should break my teeth in. Laughter's a great power, if you can use it on yourself too. I should like to meet Lord Bendish. How old is he?"

Heniker said, two-and-twenty. Poore took that quite simply. It seemed to him a matter of course that a man should be temperate, witty, a dextrous rhymester, eloquent and omniscient at two-and-twenty. He did not believe in miracles. That which was, was natural, that which was natural was reasonable. He repeated, "I shall like to see

him," and then turned to his wife, touching her shoulder for a moment. "I know that you have to talk with Mr. Heniker. I'll leave you then."

She looked up into his face. Heniker saw the encounter of their eyes. "Here at least is a wedded pair," he thought.

"Do you want to go? would you rather?" He smiled, nodding his head, then looked at Heniker as he laughed his "Much rather!" She accepted it. He touched her shoulder again, shook hands with Heniker, and went into the house. Mrs. Poore sat looking at the deepening mountains. There was a silence of some minutes, during which the dusk crept about them.

Then she asked him quietly for news of the Duke, and Heniker, encouraged by her simplicity and directness, replied.

"He sent for me, you know," he said, "on the recommendation of his own legal adviser, and gave me his confidence so far as it was necessary I should have it. He thought, and I agree with him, that I should see you in the matter of the will, and that Mr. Poore's decision should be made after discussion with yourself. You have been informed, I understand, of its provisions. I have the papers here, however, and will leave them with you for your consideration." There he stopped, not because she had interrupted him, but rather because she hadn't. He could see no more than the outline of her, the gleaming moon of her round face, in the poise of which a something or other suggested ri-

gidity. Her two hands made one white blur upon her lap. He guessed her hostile, and waited for her to declare herself.

By and by she spoke, and he knew by the tone that she was not, as yet, hostile. "What papers have you brought?" she asked him.

He said: "I used the word papers in a legal sense, unthinkingly. Strictly speaking, there is only one paper—the will."

"There was no letter? No message? Nothing to say what he wished?"

"No, there was nothing at all. The Duke told me that Mr. Lancelot did not confide in him. He asked him to be executor, and the Duke agreed. But his Grace never knew the terms of the will until it was opened and read." It was not possible for him to guess the urgency of her question, nor its despair. If he had known the testator he might have understood the hardness in her tone.

"I understand. It makes it very difficult. I thought that there might have been some hint given—it's all very—very difficult—" Then she broke out. "Of course Gervase—my husband—will never agree to take it. I know that quite well. Indeed, I don't care to ask him——"

"Perhaps," Heniker said, "you would prefer me to ask him."

She immediately said, "I should prefer it of all things, because—" then she broke off. "I don't know that I need trouble you with reasons. But we shall have to discuss it, I suppose. Will you

tell me what the Duke thought about it? Are you free to do that?"

"Perfectly free," Heniker replied. "His Grace's last words to me were, 'Of course she ought to take the money, but of course she won't.'" Smiling to herself, though he couldn't know that, she cupped her chin in her hand, and leaned forward, elbow to knee, to consider the Duke and his quiddity.

"That is exactly like him. It tells me everything I want to know. His common sense struggling with his chivalry. He knows we cannot take it—" There was glow in her tones, a kind of chuckle of approval.

"He used one reason for your acceptance," Heniker said then, "which I shall try to put before you, though it is difficult. He suggested that—the testator may have wished to signify a certain indebtedness from himself to Mr. Poore, and that he would have been happy to be sure that it would be so accepted by him. Do I make myself understood?"

"Perfectly well," she said. "I think that very true. I am sure that that is what he wished to say. I am so sure of it that, personally, I should have been glad if Gervase could have taken it. But—" then she got up. "I'm very sorry, Mr. Heniker, that I can't talk to you more freely about these things. If you leave the will here I'll talk to Gervase about it. Will you tell me something of the Duke, please? Is he well?"

Heniker was able to speak freely and enthusiastically about the great man; for not only did he

admire him unfeignedly himself, but he was quite certain that the lady's sympathy was with him. He reported his Grace as "straight as a ramrod," and immersed in the country's affairs. "He's very unpopular just now, as I daresay you know; and he is aware of it. He says that he has acquaintance but no friends." She stirred uneasily, then said, "He has more than he can remember."

This gave Heniker his cue. "Ah, but he does remember, Mrs. Poore! He remembers perhaps too well for his comfort." This brought her again to her feet. She came and stood by the table, leaning both hands upon it. "Please tell me everything he said. I ought to know."

Heniker rose also and stood by her. "Our acquaintance is very slight, but I venture to build upon it. I will tell you exactly what he said. 'Get her to come back. I'm old and lonely.' If a man of his sort talks about his age it is because he feels it; if of his loneliness, he's very lonely."

She agreed with him, speaking very softly. "Yes, yes, you are right. I'm sure he wants me, but—" Then she broke off. "Yes, I'll go. It is my duty—I owe it him. Yes, I'll go. I'll talk to Gervase about it. He'll understand it."

A sudden luminous flash from her, soft yet beating fire in her eyes, shone upon him. "It is difficult, you see, because of the children. They are so young to travel, and do so well here—but of course we must risk that."

He had forgotten, or had never been told, that

there were children, and it came very strongly into his mind that he would like to see them, or her with them. She would look at her best with children, he thought.

But now she turned to him, and gave him her hand. "I am very much obliged to you. You have been most kind and tactful. No one could have been kinder. You will come again, of course, before you go back. Perhaps you will dine with us—or sup?" He professed himself at her call, and then made his little enquiry. "The children are abed, I suppose?" She gave him her full attention.

"Not yet; but it's bedtime." Then she flushed and glowed. "Would you like to see them?"

"I should like it of all things." Her eyes laughed. She beckoned him to follow her. He felt as if she was leading him by the hand.

Two round-eyed, flaxen little creatures were being washed by the old *serva*. The boy stood, stark as he was born; the girl was on the woman's lap. Both were rosy, sturdy, fine-fleshed, round-faced, blue-eyed; both had their father's scowl, ridiculously softened. When she stood in the door the boy cried "Mother!" and ran to her. Then he saw Heniker, and clutched at the gown of safety. She picked him up and showed him with pride. "Italy agrees with him." Her voice had cheer in it. "It agrees with you too, I think," he said. She ignored the obvious implication without embarrassment, and took over her duties from the *serva*, covering

herself first with a goodly apron. Heniker, with her boy on his knee, sat out the ceremonial, and saw the pair to bed. The boy stood up to his mother's ear while he said his prayer. Heniker watched him, his eyes dim.

Returned to his lodging, he found Bendish and the poet in full debate, thoroughly interested in each other, discussing the immortality of the soul and similar high themes. Mr. Poore insisted that his new friend must sup with him and his wife. "You will love her," he said; "everybody must; but if you do not you mustn't like me."

"Ah, my dear sir," Bendish said, "I assure you that I am very prone to like my friends' wives. On your head be it!"

"In my heart, I think," said Poore, and they went off together, talking vehemently. Heniker was asked, but declined. He knew when he was wanted. Besides, he had had his whack.

CHAPTER XI

THE WEDDED LOVERS

MR. GERVASE POORE, thus in happy exile at Rapallo, was a poet of originality and force—force both of conviction and of utterance. He was always perfectly certain that he was right, and in its time, but not in his, the world came to be much of his opinion. For the world of his own day he was too simple and too sincere. That world took his simplicity for affectation, and his sincerity for crude brutality. But he was neither affected nor brutal. He was as far as technic goes an idealistic realist. He saw ideas as palpable, breathing shapes, and he wrote them down literally as he saw them, just as a modern novelist will describe a Jew scratching his head, or a shopgirl in a hysterical passion. He saw them dreadful or beautiful, for pity or terror, and believed them worth his pains of description. The world thought them untrue and improper, when it thought about them at all, which was not very often. For the most part it ignored Mr. Poore, since he chose to express himself wholly in verse; but there had been a time when, expressing himself in sudden and dramatic action, it could not ignore him. That was when, three years before the time I am now dealing with, he had run away

with Mrs. Lancelot, a very fair and very gentle lady, who talked less and was more talked of than any woman in the great world of politics and fashion. Of her, in her day, the world of great and small alike heard gladly, not only because she was a very pretty woman who had eloped, nor again because she had been the wife of the Right Honourable Charles Lancelot, M.P., but rather for that she, beautiful, fashionable, unseeking and besought, had been the close friend, and many said the more than friend, of the Duke of Devizes, greatest man in England.

The world said that she made a double elopement in that twilight hour when she left husband and friend together at Fontemagra in the Apennines and joined her poet lover on the lower road. For since the death of the Duchess in 1825 she and her *ci-devant* lord had lived in the Duke's house, and dared Rumour's thousand tongues. Every one of these had been bravely at work ever since, wagging, clanging, and booming like Florentine bells at Ave Maria, proclaiming romance on the upstroke and shame on the down; but she had gone her beautiful, quiet and ordered way, never far from the side of her great ally, with never a sign of faltering from the path of her destiny, never a hint that she had a care of her own. It added to the choiceness of the situation that she was one of your recluse, carven women who have to be sought out to be discovered lovely, who never flaunt themselves, who rarely speak. You come to guess in time that they heed

everything; that those guarded eyes can break down every guard, that those grave lips hold back ardent breath, and what tender offices of healing and mercy lie waiting in those still hands. It was a shock to her world, which had so far taken little stock of her, when the Duke of Devizes picked her out of a thousand for unique devotion—deserting for her sake a miscellaneous bevy chosen at random and held lightly together for the whims of an appetite which, even then, was thought to be gross; but that same world stood astounded when Gervase Poore, unknown and out-at-elbows, huddling (one thought) in the nameless crowd at great doors, flashed sudden eyes upon her, clove his way to her—in his old coat—through the press of dandies and uniforms, and summoned her to follow him out into the foggy dew. They said that he haunted her whereabouts; literally that he tracked her from great house to great house and jostled with the mob at the doors to see her entry and exit. A story was told of a book of hot-pressed rhymes, all about her, which came to her notice and brought him a card for a ball at Wake House. They said that he went, saw and conquered; that from that hour she was his. He made no concessions, and she asked none. The great assumption was implied and accepted. The lovers, in Italy with the Duke, and the husband too, fled to Rapallo. There was a pursuit, an interview between the husband and lover, the Duke being present; then came the return to England of the two injured men; then the Divorce Bill; then

the death of Lancelot, and this too magnanimous will. That is, roughly speaking, the tale. Meantime, from Rapallo had come nothing but—rhymes. *Roland: an Epic*, in 1827, a strange succession of savage battle and white love scenes; and in 1829 *The Vision of Argos*, which was understood to be the fruits of a voyage in the Levant which he and his beloved had made in 1828. The curious in such matters took pleasure in finding his mistress under the veils of his fierce and exalted verse. She was, they said, Roland's Aude the Fair—even her round face was on Aude's shoulders; she walked through *The Vision*, a slim, low-breasted Helen. How long could this go on? They were married, of course, by now! And do poets continue to sing of their wives?

They were married, and they were lovers, and so far that exalted, so far-sought, so rarely-found state of grace was theirs that no satisfaction appeased desire, and no mingling of natures blended one in the other; but each saw in each the crown of his own. In an enchanted world, its only human tenants, they walked handfasted. For ever must he love, and she be fair. If she had been fair before when care had drawn her cheeks, dimmed her eyes, and wasted her form, she was radiant now, with love to make her blood sting, to flush her cheeks, ripen her breast, make her eyes to shine like dancing water. But her beauty was rather spiritual than bodily: it was of her soul, swift as a wind-driven cloud, of her mind as true as a rare mirror, of her heart as bountiful as the lap of Demeter.

All this, by the grace of God, transfiguring, glorifying, making sacred her sweet body, he saw still and adored. But Love to the like of Poore was a soaring flight, which you flew carrying in your hands a filmy wonder which it behoved you, howsoever you towered, to keep from harm. An adverse breath might shatter it; yet it was very strong. It looked like a bubble of foam; yet no shock would touch it, to hurt—except it passed through yourself. You yourself were its strength: it was just as strong as you were. And at the topmost peak of your rocket-flight, at your proudest moment of uplifting, while you were in the very act to spurn the stars with your footsoles, a thin cold stream of air might thread a way through you, and puff! the treasure was star-dust, and headlong down sped you, like the stick of a rocket. Down, if you are lucky, you break your neck and have done with it; but it may be that you live, a maimed, tortured sight, and drag out a length of days hunting the world for your scattered star-dust. Some doomed wretches so do; and some of them seek it on dunghills, and some about the altars of churches. But they never find it again.

So Poore flew a perilous flight; but meantime his head was among the stars, and his heart felt the great air, and his mouth was a trumpet for paean. As for her—but what is great love to a woman? Pride in secret, treasure to hoard, largess to give out by the lapful at a time. Georgiana Poore was become a well of charity since she had

filled herself with Gervase. Loved by him, she felt that she loved all the world. She had no fragile vase to carry on her flight; rather, it carried her, held her like a shrine. In it she stood, her hands stretched out, holding her cloak wide, that all the outcasts and naked of the world might come and find shelter and warmth. To love Gervase was no service; she breathed Gervase. To do the service which she owed was impossible; she could not love enough.

Such a woman, a wellspring of love, is born to be the mate of a man, and will bear her children, and love them too, for love's sake. I don't think she loved them, as your inevitable mothers do, because they were hers, but rather because they were his. She was always a little remote from them, never quite in their busy, teeming world. She came down to them, as the Angel came to Dante, in mercy, love, and charity; but she was denizen of a thinner air, and could not help the labouring of her breath as she served. To Poore this effort in her way of service made her the more adorable, emphasized her distinction, enhanced her. She stooped, she pitied, she served, like Demeter. It was an exquisite domestication, the taming of a Goddess. And, if the Duke were right—and he was a shrewd observer—this Goddess would be thoroughly domesticated before her time was up.

So much preface is due to the after-doings of this high-flying pair, upon whose present happy state Bendish is now looming.

CHAPTER XII

THREATENED INTERIOR

IN the twilight hour when Heniker was exhibiting his mission to Mrs. Poore, and making friends with her children, her husband was gathering enthusiasm as he walked with eager steps that valley road which ran, like a narrow ledge, between precipice and abyss. Quite suddenly, having reached a decisive point of desire, he turned right about, to face the sea, and, urging down the hill into the town, swept into Bendish's lodgings like a crested wave and carried the young lord off his feet. He strode towards him with his hand out. "My lord," he said, "let me shake hands with you. My name is Poore. I know a good man when I hear of him, and can't afford to miss the sight of him. We both love England and hate her tyrants. You can laugh at them and I can howl. Between us we might do something."

He spoke just as he felt at the moment, without calculation; but that was the way to catch Bendish: snatch him up before he had time to remember that he was a victim of unrequited love, or a lonely thinker exiled for his opinions, or before he could hit upon the proper way of imposing himself upon a man whom he suspected of strength. To this he

would certainly have turned his effort if he had been given time. He had been intimidated by the serious way in which his friends had spoken of Poore: there, at least, he had felt—out there at Rapallo—was couched a spirit which might mate with his own, or vie with it. He must keep an eye for anything that came from Rapallo. He had done so, and the constant outlook had fretted his nerves. He was bad at waiting, as all imaginative men are. When Heniker had declared his mission, then, he decided to rush in. Like a terrier at the fox's earth, he would grapple and have done with it. By the time he reached Rapallo he was in such a state of tense expectancy that Poore was become an enemy to be stalked. Mentally, he drew towards him foot by wary foot, throwing up earthworks as he went. If the thing had gone its normal course, all the formalities of credentials observed, the odds are that he would have been at his most inaccessible when they finally met. He would have played the man of fashion or the peer, and baffled the poet.

But nothing of this happened. Bendish, instead, flushed and happy, shook hands with simple gratitude. "This is very kind of you, Mr. Poore. I don't deserve it—as yet; but I am grateful." Poore, already thinking of more important things, began at once to talk of them. No diplomat could have gone more skilfully to work.

He was at his favourite exercise, pacing the room with light and lunging strides. His hands were behind his back, his head thrust forward. He

looked like a man breasting a gale of wind. "I haven't heard an English voice or seen an English face for three years and more—save one, save one—the mirror of my own. You know, no doubt, so much of my history. I did a simple thing simply, and abide by it in the land where such things can be done still. I found a lovely and hapless creature enmeshed in horrible circumstance. I cut the nets away—what else could I do? Love, that power of the wing, drew us up together out of sight and sound of clamour and horror; but I believe I should have done what I did out of pure pity and understanding. However that may be, the thing was done, and here we have remained, shaping life to the round, as two may do who have but one heart between them. I think that the time is coming when we must put ourselves to the test: we don't want to shirk our business in the world. We fit ourselves to do it here—but it lies, we know, over there. . . .

"There is a sense in which I see England, the venerable mother of us all, fettered and entangled, as I saw my love, helpless in the snares of circumstance. I see, and I declare—and can I do more?" He stopped in his pacing to look at his companion. With his march his voice ceased its rhythmic beat. He grew younger and less inspired. "I'm not prepared to say that I can. There's cut-and-thrust work out there for somebody—but the fisticuffs of a mob! Cobbett's fists, Burdett's, do no more than Dick's and Harry's—and lead them—whither?

O Heaven! To a hustings! To vote like free men? Not so. But to cheer while shopkeepers vote! Reckon up the worth of that in blood and tears. It's not so much a leader that they want as a seer. . . .

"If a poet can do anything—at least he can see. He can undress notions and hold them up in their nakedness as God made them. To some it is like the unclouding of the sun; but some are left bleeding raw—those which have never had any natural covers of their own—and look like skinned rabbits. Is not that, perhaps, our business in England? Yes, it's our first, but not necessarily our last, because we are men as well as seers. We too are throttled by tyrant circumstance. Somebody has to act, some one must lead. Shall the blind lead the blind? You see where they are tending—to the hustings, to the lobby! And there are fields to till, and grain to sow, and women to love, and songs to sing, and children to get—and the stars above us. O God, and we die and we die, that shopmen may vote whig and tory!" He stopped, throwing up his hands, then said finally, "So much for the leadership of the blind."

Lord Bendish was very astute when he met a man of mettle, and very quick. Half an eye told him all that he needed. Knowing his man, you could trust him to adapt himself, to find the key which let him in by the private door. Gravity, simplicity, directness characterised him throughout the order of the night. If Poore was for resolving

politics to the elements, he was ready for him. He eschewed parties, and contemplated with his new friend *The Rights of Man*, and *Political Justice*. Between them they undressed the creature as bare as he was born,—and barer by a good deal; for when Heniker came in to dine he found them busy about his soul, as has been revealed already.

Talking fiercely, they went up the hill and reached the villa. There Georgiana stood within the doorway, starry-eyed, and with face aflame for her lover. And there Bendish became another person. Confronted with woman, that beast of chase, he was made man again—that untirable hunter.

But there was nothing apparent. The change was internal. Presented, he saluted her with high courtesy, and did not lose his accessibility. There was no flagrancy about his interest in the fashionable lady who had demoded herself, nothing whatever to show that his vanity was piqued, and that he was immediately prepared to pit himself against the possessor of her heart. But it was so. His vanity was all alight; every word that he used, every gesture, every look was a move in a game at which already he was insatiable and a good hand. He had a keen eye too for women. He saw this one to be of rare quality. Her reticence, her frugality both of form and colour, her masked as well as her revealed fire, the paradox she was—shy and daring, guarded in word, yet heedless in action, beautiful rather by implication than in fact: all this he found infinitely provoking. He studied her parts

like an amateur of statuary. Who was the cunning artist who moulded this woman so slight and yet so exquisite? She had the forms of a child upon the model of a goddess. Nothing too much! was his maxim as he worked.

Acutely sensitive to voluptuous suggestion, he assured himself of these things as he gazed at her, even in the moment of making his first bow; but the impetuosity of his host swept him into the house and to the supper-table, claimed him for his own and lifted him into fields of abstract speculation where he was expected to take his share of the glorious game of tossing the spheres about like shuttlecocks. Bendish did it well—did it indeed the better for having a witness of his feats. In spectatorship, as in all else, he found Georgiana provocative. She said little, and betrayed rarely what she felt as she listened and watched; but nothing escaped Bendish, who felt himself now and then rewarded by a gleam, by a flush of colour, by a smile, as if she hardly cared to confess her pleasure in the talk, even to herself. The meal was of the simplest, Poore and his wife spare eaters, and Bendish, very sensitive to suggestion, found himself (to his amusement) as austere as they were. He watched with all his eyes the messages which passed between his host and hostess.

He had seen the look in Georgiana's eyes when they came into the light; and Poore's quick movement towards her. Their hands had encountered and clasped for a moment. Her face had strained

towards him, but there had been no kissing. "Dearest," Poore had said immediately, "I bring you Lord Bendish," and she had immediately turned to face her visitor. She had offered her hand—so thin a hand—without a word, conventional or otherwise. Her welcome had been in her eyes, he thought, frank and friendly. Interested? Yes, he thought so; and for the rest of the evening he devoted himself to calling up that first friendly, interested regard. Poore was not an exorbitant speaker. When he had delivered himself of the burden of his heart he was apt to fall into brooding silences. During these Bendish talked his best, addressing the pair, but with his eye for the lady. He kept her attention, he observed; and more than that, she necessitated his. He had to be wary, for she was apt to flash a sudden question upon him when something escaped him which she did not follow. He saw that her mind was engaged, that she did not relish talk for its own sake, but like a good hound kept to the first scent and was not easily thrown out. Yet she was very quick; few allusions escaped her.

After supper Poore came to himself and asked her about the children. She smiled her assurance that they were sound asleep, and when he went out of the room, tiptoe already at the mere thought of sleep, she did not go with him. Bendish saw his way to establishing a relation.

"He loves them?"

Her eyes enveloped him. "He adores them."

"You have two children?"

"Yes."

"You are happy then." He said this as commentary, not without the implication upon his own loneliness which a sigh might afford. At the moment he undoubtedly felt that he was lonely. But she did not take up the hint, and he found out that her ears were set back for the return of Poore. The poet presently re-entered the room.

His face was irradiate. "They are beautiful," he said to Bendish. "Come and look at them."

Not even Bendish was offended by the simplicity of this proposal. He immediately rose and stood by the door. Georgiana slowly got up—as if unwillingly—and passed between the two men. Bendish saw her eyelids flicker as she went under her husband's eyes. He missed nothing.

She led them into a long narrow white room lit by a floating wick, and full of shadows and glooms. An old white-haired peasant woman rose and hid her hands under her apron. Georgiana was standing by the bed, looking down upon the rapt pair within it. Two flaxen heads, two glowing cheeks—Bendish from under his brows watched the mother.

He judged that she was not moved as Poore was. He judged that she saw in them the fruit of pain and weariness; but grudging none of it, seemed above their needs, as if she knew their necessities before they asked and their ignorance in asking. It was odd to Bendish, and moved him strongly, that she who had had all the suffering of the tillage and the reaping should by that very fact be now

so remote from it. They were of her very flesh and blood, and yet she looked down upon them now with gentle pity, with compassionate humour—as if wondering that things so small could come out of need so vast and love and anguish so untold as that involved. Beneath her husband's eyes she stood and looked, and all surrender, all the splendid humble bounty of woman was upon her musing face. "I give, I give, and still I give! Ah, so small a thing, which seemed so great!" Bendish, indeed, missed nothing.

Poore was looking at the dreaming pair through misty eyes. "They are fast—fast; they are not here. God knows where they are floating now." Georgiana, seeing them intensely, smiled—a smile at once tender and strange. Bendish thought her almost dreadfully remote. As if her secret mind was aware of his concern, presently she stooped and daintily kissed the cheek of each. As she straightened from the devotion, her husband's hand touched her waist, just lit and touched her there; and by a pretty gesture she leaned back until she felt the support of him. She stood into him, Bendish considered, as one might stand in the angle of a wall, touching each face, protected from the winds. It was only a momentary shelter that she took, for soon she moved away, with a nod to the old watcher of the room.

Shortly afterwards Bendish took his leave, and the poet went with him to the gate. They stood for a moment under the stars, upon whose flower-

strewn field cypresses made lagoons of deep black. Neither man spoke, but Bendish knew that his host was huge with exaltation, and saw that he was restless with it.

As he went down the hill to his lodging a moment's pang disturbed him. This pretty interior—he was then to break in upon it! He gloomed upon his fate. The Man of Destiny! The Wrecker of Hearths!

Within the doomed house Poore had his wife in his arms, while she told him of her interview with Heniker. It was the fact that Poore himself felt the approach of something like a doom, while giving himself assurance after assurance that nothing in what she told him could be a possible threatening to his present happiness. How could it be? Love and trust were in every fold of her clear voice, they were implied in every note of her thought. Yet what she said had the impress of a sobbed confession, and so stabbed while it touched him. “Dearest,” she said, “I feel that we owe him so much—” She was, of course, speaking of the Duke—for the dispositions of poor Charles Lancelot’s money were waved aside at the outset!—“so much that we can’t pay him enough. He gave me to you—he had claims upon me from the very beginning, and made nothing of them. He was very generous—he thought nothing of himself—and now that he’s getting old, and is lonely, I do think it may be my duty to do what I can. I didn’t understand from Mr.

Heniker that he asked me to go back, in so many words—but Mr. Heniker believed that he wanted me—and I feel certain of it myself—so that, if you could see your way—”

This was a perilous moment, though it didn't last long. Here was the wife asking leave to go back to succour an old lover—asking with a falter in her voice, but with clear intention, with too clear desire. And yet—and yet—not a doubt of her! Poore, maybe, was still too much the lover to be enough the mate of such a woman as this. For the moment he felt mortally stabbed. His hold upon her relaxed, his arms fell from her. He plunged his hands into his breeches' pockets.

“What do you want of me, my love?” he said. “Permission to return? But—you are free as air.”

She looked at him with wide-open, sad eyes. “You know that I shouldn't go back unless you said that it was right. It couldn't be right unless you—unless we both saw it so.” She strained away her face; when she turned it to him again there were tears in her eyes. “Oh, Gervase, we must always see together—that means everything to me.”

He was touched immediately—“My love, my love—” He had her to his breast again. “You are the lamp to my feet. I was dismayed for a moment, and lost the way. But a word from you brings me back. I trust your view of duty absolutely. Say no more—we will go back—you shall do whatever you feel to be due— I can't grudge

any man or woman in the world the light of your charity—but”—he clasped her fiercely—“love me, for God’s sake—love me for ever.”

“My love, my love,” she said, and gave him her lips.

CHAPTER XIII

THE INVADING SEED

HENIKER, summoned to the Villa, met the family in conclave. The mother, in white, had the baby on her lap; the boy, shockheaded, flaxen and flushed, with his father's scowl and sulky blue eyes beneath it, sat on the floor and played with incredibly small stones imported with grunts from the garden; the father, hands deep in his pockets, forged about the room while he uttered himself. He was very detached—his thoughts came from him in jets, like water from an intermittent pump. He had the air of a giant irritated by gnats, surprised at his own annoyance, quite unable to see what it was that annoyed him so much. Heniker's eyes found a haven of peace from the strong waters when they turned to Georgiana looking benevolently down at the child swarming at her breast after her string of beads. She added nothing to what her husband said or refrained from saying, but Heniker knew that she was listening.

"We have discussed it, you know, and we conclude that it's quite impossible. . . . It seems ungracious to refuse a dead man . . . yet he has a better chance of understanding, I believe, than a living one. . . . I see his motive . . . it had been better not thrust into one's hands. . . . It is like

a plea—‘Take it, or you blame me again.’ He need not have thought it of us. . . . All that a man could do—more than most would do—he did. But to perpetuate his atonement—to keep his body on the cross . . . before our eyes. . . . No, no. He sees that we are right now—he knows better. . . . It can’t be. Money is an accursed thing . . . it falsifies relations, it puts you wrong with yourself, and with your neighbours. We can have nothing to do with it. . . . But my wife’s own money is another matter. I don’t see how she can avoid having it. . . . You will no doubt do what may be proper about that. She renounced it, of course, so long as he lived . . . while it was, morally, subject to settlement . . . but now . . . I trust you to do the right thing for her and her children. . . .

“Ah, and there’s another thing which she wishes me to say to you. We return to England shortly. Pray tell that to the Duke . . . she has told me that he is anxious . . . well, she will see him soon. . . . My feeling is that there are troubles ahead. . . . I know very little about politics . . . it hardly seems to me a practical matter. Practical matters—life, death, air to breathe and food to eat—are going to intervene. You can’t drill starving men. This rick-burning, this machine-smashing, these gaunt mobs about the fields—this means starvation. The whole thing’s wrong—not to be solved by a trumpery Reform Bill. You might as well allay brain-fever with a small-toothed comb! Oh, Mr. Heniker, it’s absurd. . . . But these things are not

our immediate concern . . . we will go back . . . that's settled. . . ." Then, quite suddenly, he broke off and held his hand out. "Good-bye, Mr. Heniker . . . I must go and walk about." He turned to his wife, picked up her hand and kissed the tips of her fingers. She looked up, seriously searching his face. Love and gratitude beamed from her. He hovered, stooped suddenly and kissed her, touched the head of the child in her arms and went out. The room seemed strangely calm.

Heniker had a few words more with Georgiana. She gave him a letter for the Duke. "Tell him that I shall see him soon. We have talked it all over. My husband agrees with me—I hope you will have a good journey. I suppose that we shall go by sea—from Genoa. It costs much less, and is easier with children."

Heniker thought that that depended—on the sea. No, no, she said, they both loved a sea-voyage. She glowed gravely as he asked leave to kiss the children, watched him do it, and was very friendly as he went, going with him to the door encumbered with the heavy child, and standing there, a slip of a Madonna, to see him go. The last thing he saw of the Villa was that slim shaft of grace, leaning back to its burden—the sun upon her hair and the blue of her eyes. He thought as he went, There is a woman in whom is no guile.

Lord Bendish, having other things to think of, bid him a light farewell. "I shall stay here," he

said. "I like the place—I like the people. I shall probably take a villa and get some servants. Horses I must have too. If you could have stayed, I should have been glad—but I suppose Mackintosh can do what's absolutely necessary. You might see that they pack my books for me. I have written fully to Wybrow. You have the letter with the others? Good. Nothing else, I think. Oh, yes, money! You must send me some immediately. I may run short." Reminded of the Coronation, he was scornful. He damned the Coronation. Free men didn't walk behind kings, he said. He was in a rising republican mood. Heniker chuckled to see him pound up and down the room like Poore. Then he set out for home, and Rose Pierson.

Here begins an association with which the Poores, at any rate, had no call to reproach themselves, though to Poore himself, reflecting upon it later, the conjunction of Lord Bendish and the passage homewards had a sinister effect, one upon the other. Poore was too much the poet not to be an exorbitant lover, giving all so long as all was given, seeing his love so high above him that should she really come within reach she would hardly have seemed the same rare creature to him. It is useless to deny that he was wounded by her desire to comfort the Duke. Perhaps he was more bruised than wounded. He did not bleed at the heart; there was no loss of virtue; but there was a soreness, the place was tender. There was a note of despair now, making

in her mind, and vowed to herself how gently she would guide him through the thorny wastes.

Into this paradise, then, invaded by the pointed seed, came young Lord Bendish holding out hands of adventure, promising greatly of England and fine fun there. He had made himself acceptable at the first to Poore; as time went on Georgiana was glad enough of him for Poore's sake. On her own account she withheld her judgment, which was cool and shrewd at once, and based upon a knowledge of the waking, ostensible world far more thorough than Poore's had ever been or ever could be. Politics, which to him were a matter of high theory, were known to her for a great game, passionately pursued by men who took life itself and everything in it as a game. She had been the wife of a politician since she left the schoolroom, and the close friend of the greatest of them all. She had met every politician in England, and the wives of them. Of them all she only knew one who took the business practically, as she took it herself (in spite of high theory), and that one was her old friend the Duke of Devizes. He very simply said, "This country has got to be kept going in the face of Europe and to its own face. The job is difficult, but it can be done if everybody minds his own business. There's no room for theory, which means that some people will speculate and experiment with other people's business. That's not practical, and it's not sense. Let them dream in their beds, or howl to the stars,

if they must, on their roof-tops; but let me alone and I'll keep England going." And so he had in his plain unemotional way, and deep in her heart Georgiana felt sure that he had done rightly and well. She loved Gervase entirely, and saw him winged and irradiate, a seraph soaring the upper air. If he came down to earth what could happen to him but battery and bruises?

But here was the young lord, presently flying an avowedly lower level, and inviting Gervase to join him there with a view to a descent upon England. This was not obvious at first; at first poetry and high theory seemed his only care. Great evenings were spent during which Gervase thundered out his *Vision of Argos*, or staves of his *Roland*, Bendish rapt at his feet or pacing the loggia with a light tiptoe restlessness peculiar to him. Or Poore expounded his theory of poetry, which insisted rather on a rhythm of picture and image than of music and melody, and Bendish listened attentively and offered but few objections. He seemed content to be disciple, and did not offer to contribute any of his own compositions to the symposium. I think this unwonted frugality of his must be attributed rather to his waning interest in poetry, than to acknowledgment that Gervase was his master. He was certainly tending to something more tangible than poetry, and gradually, then, during long walks which the pair took together, the stream of debate came to centre about politics, and Bendish's real aims were to be discussed. Georgiana pres-

ently saw that he intended for leadership of men, and to be a breaker rather than a maker. She seriously doubted whether he had anything to make; but it seemed as if Gervase were going to take that for granted.

Both these young men were agreed that the Reform Bill was little to the purpose except as a handle for revolt. It might be a useful housebreaker's tool. Bendish said, "The Duke means to throw it out of our House. It's a serious question whether anybody should try to stop him."

Gervase, very calm at the moment, with the calmness of despair, thought that he should be let alone. "No friend of liberty," he said, "can wish the Reform Bill to pass. The tyranny of the shopkeepers will be infinitely straiter than that of the squires. It will be a steel mill for a millstone. It will crush the finer. There will be a despotism of petty facts instead of one of broad principle. As things are now, every right of man is defied, truly; but under the tradesmen's House of Commons every law of God will be smothered. I had rather things remained as they were."

Bendish objected—"No man can look on tyranny unmoved. If we break one, we can break all. We can break the very tradition of tyranny. And acquiescence in tyranny itself has become a habit. I conceive it a good thing to break that down."

Gervase gloomed on. "How do you think to set about it? What is your plan?"

"Roughly, it is to excite public feeling to the highest pitch of human endurance. Then, when the Duke disregards that—as he will—let the Bill be thrown out by the peers—and—"

Gervase was watching him out of cavernous, smouldering eyes. "And—?" he said.

Bendish leapt to his height. "—and the country is alight," he said, "and the torch is carried from end to end."

Gervase nodded. "Yes, I see it. All goes down in fire and smoke—but what comes out? You mean a civil war?"

"I mean Revolt. England must be free."

"France," Gervase said, "was never free—for one moment."

"We learn from that. We will have no Buonaparte—with a Waterloo involved. Or if we have him, he too will have learned."

There Gervase was with him. "I think that certain," he said. "No one, fit to be a leader of men, can have failed to see that Buonaparte was a brigand. If the world can't be made to feel that it's better to make one man than to kill fifty, I shall despair of it. But I don't despair, because I think the thing can be made plain. The eternal verities are here, all about us. I see them as plainly as I see you. Can I not open the eyes of men? I believe that I can."

"There shall be an Epic of Revolt," cried Bendish—"and you shall sing it."

"Not so," said the other. "An epic chants a

thing done. It is the Hymn of History. We need to see, not to remember. Good God, let us forget all that we can! No, no. Let there be a Vision of Revolt."

"Dream you," said Bendish, "and sing your dream; and I will serve it." Gervase fell into a reverie which lasted out the night. Georgiana, busy with her needle, listened and judged. From the heights where love and motherhood had placed her she looked down compassionate upon the antics of men. Bendish too sat silent, watching her, seeing all the beauty that rayed from her bent-down head and quiet breast, or flashed in the passes of her hand. Presently, however, with a sigh he rose and went away without formalities observed, leaving Poore engrossed in his dream. Georgiana had to sleep alone—for Poore carried his dreams out with him, and walked with them under the stars.

CHAPTER XIV

"THE VISION OF REVOLT"

I DON'T consider *The Vision of Revolt*—which a scornful critic nicknamed "The Hodgias"—one of Poore's great poems, though it is now the fashion to praise it. It has many of his sledge-hammer descriptions; scenes occur—one lights upon them—which seem to have been hacked out of granite, and terrifically undercut. These things are usual in his poetry, and were plainly such a joy to him in the doing that he could never resist them, however much he would have gained by so doing. It is impassioned, it is sincere, and it has a cumulative power in it which certainly carries one on beyond the point where the wave itself spends. But, personally, I much prefer his *Vision* of an Argos, which may or may not have been, to that of an England which will never, surely, be while Englishmen pay taxes and drink beer. Poore was essentially an erotic poet, not in any weak or unworthy sense—for his Eros was Plato's great god, or Dante's, rather than the lascivious boy of the Romans or the Elizabethan young rascal. Love to him was a divine madness, sex an accident and not a cause. But there is no love-theme in *The Vision of Revolt*,

and very little love-imagery—except the scene in the garret:—

Where two pale lovers breast to breast,
Cling to each other beneath the moon;
And of the garret make a nest
Wherein to take their still delight,
And in their rags spell out their rune—

and a few more of the kind where the love-imagery is used for a definite purpose of showing that love, like death, makes all men equal—except, I say, for detached passages of that sort love is not the theme of the poem.

His hero is Hodge, the Englishman, and he tracks him from the Conquest up the ages, past the present and into the future. History sweeps by like a series of crimson dreams; Hodge is always in the foreground, bending to his field-work, on the down with his sheep, munching his bacon under the hedge while the withering northeaster screams through the thorns, and earth and air are a parched drab—all this while Norman squadrons and Plantagenet bowmen, Tudor and Stuart Cavaliers, Roundheads, Hanoverian levies, conscripts from his own stock march and countermarch across the scene. It is so far an Epic of Endurance, a dumb agony. Lurid lights play about this earth-born Prometheus—Black Death, Civil War, Lollardry, witch-burning; Chaucer sings and passes; Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare strut their hours. One Cromwell kills a God, another kills a king; Hodge remains bound to his

glebe, eating bacon, working all day, sleeping like a log, loving his wife on Sunday afternoons, begetting and burying children. Masters drive him to the furrows, kings drive him into battle, priests bicker over his soul, the parish deals with his body. But he remains doggedly in touch with the eternal things—in a way not possible to any more glittering co-tenant of his—Love, Work, and God—and because of his foothold there he is immovable by those other transient phantoms, and remains the same while they change and pass. Even so he bends stolidly to his tasks and holds grimly to his instincts, while “thunder from France” passes over him, and while Buonaparte, the arch-thief and king, picks Europe’s pocket. Triumphs and Dooms of Kings touch him not. With Waterloo the first part ends—the first twelve books of the poem.

The rest is prophecy: Hodge is to be seen King of England, if you can talk of kingship where every man is a king. Here the poet is vehement, but shadowy. The sharper his words bite, the less, it seems to me, have they to bite upon. It is a dream of pure Anarchy; of a Golden Age, if you will—where the whole world is Eden, and God once more walks in His garden in the cool of the day. The great Reform Bill naturally plays a very small part in bringing all this about, as you may imagine. He keeps that well in focus. That is a remarkable fact; for writing when he did, it was almost impossible not to see the Reform agitation distorted out of all proportion. But several steps are omitted;

the poem gathers in swing as it goes on, and rather carries you with it on a flood of rhetoric than guides you over the mountain pass. Once surrender yourself to it and you may reach the poet's goal, somewhat out of breath and with a bruise here and there where you have been bumped against a jutting rock. If you try, however, any of your school-strokes of swimming, you will find yourself swept into an eddy before you are aware, and then in shoal water with your knees scraping the sand. I regret that I can't give a better analysis of Poore's apocalypse, but I confess that I don't follow it all. His Epic of English History I admire—his "Hodgiad" in fact. Hodge is a fine giant, worthy to be King—but I should like to know how he reached his throne.

The composition of this strange and vehement, of this savage and ruthless poem, as swift as he himself was when once at work, occupied Poore the better part of six months. During a great part of that time he was very invisible to his wife and children and to his new friend Lord Bendish. He disappeared directly he was out of his bed and, it was believed, betook himself to the hills where occasionally he was seen ranging level places, his hands behind his back, his shoulders thrust forward, his eyes wild, his head bare to the sun. Strange boomings came from him, torrential hummings, occasionally savage cries. The native goatherds crossed themselves and watched him in apprehension from behind rocks. He took no food with him—but was

sometimes seen to drink of mountain pools, or tarns,—and returned late in the evening, exhausted but in good spirits, still absorbed in his thoughts, to write down, with a red-hot pen, what he had composed during his solitary tramlings of the wilds. He ate a meal of minestra and vegetables, drank two glasses of wine and was ready for work. He wrote furiously, far into the night, then tumbled on to his bed and slept like a log. He seemed not to be aware of his surroundings, knew not his lovers and friends. Georgiana waited on him closely, discerned every need, said nothing, watched everything and hoped all things. She was anxious to go to England; she had the Duke on her conscience—but nothing could be done while the fit was on her husband. And this was a fit of unusual severity, and had one unique symptom, which was that when he began to write, he went to work with a secrecy quite strange to him, which could not suffer that a soul should see one word until he had emptied himself of all. She knew by that sign that he was less than usually absorbed in his task although knit to it, by force of will, in every fibre of his body—for by ordinary he had read his poems to her as they progressed, and had asked, and sometimes taken, her advice. But with this one he was strict to keep his own counsel, and Georgiana, whom love had made divinely intelligent, suspected the truth—which was that he doubted of her agreement and dared not prove how rightly he doubted. He hoped, certainly, to overwhelm her judgment

by the momentum of the whole rushing thing, but would not risk the failure of a part of it. She did not resent that, but she had a sinking of the heart whenever she remembered it; for it was a true instinct in him. The fact was that, so far as she could guess what he was at, she did not approve of the project. She was afraid of what would follow it. Bendish, she had seen, was for practice more than theory. She disliked Bendish and distrusted him. She knew that Gervase was not fitted for politics, and didn't want him to be. The Blessed Isles towards which he steered every barque of his were never to be compassed by politicians. She found herself watching the lover whom she admired as much as adored with a sickening certainty of failure and loss ahead of him.

The effect of Poore's sudden frenzy of composition upon his vivacious and suggestive friend was rather comic. It left him with nothing whatever to do in the matter. He was rather in the position of a hardy rider who puts his blood-horse at a stiff line of country—say, stone walls and water, or bare rolling hills with deepish bottoms of plough-land in between them. The noble beast sniffs the danger through his red nostrils, pricks his thin ears and shakes his fine small head; and then, as a preliminary to action, unseats his rider, deposits him on the turf, and leaps forward to the adventure. So sat Lord Bendish now while Gervase careered at large.

Another thing which made him ill at ease was that Georgiana took no particular interest in him. There was a polite affectation of interest; she talked with him, walked with him occasionally, listened to what he had to say and occasionally laughed at him. In fact, she was not at all uneasy in his company, rather, she was too easy by half. This was new to his experience. He began to desire her extremely. He had found her situation—as the heroine of a recent scandal—and her person alike provocative of most romantic inclinations. He was poet enough himself to see that she was rarely beautiful, but not to understand that it was really her mind which transfigured her body. He had not been apt to suppose that women had minds at all; his approaches to the attack had been of the usual kind, therefore, and had failed. Not only had he failed but the lady had not even known that she was beleaguered. Assuredly this state of things must be altered or Bendish would have to admit his own failure.

Georgiana was essentially simple; Bendish was not at all simple. When he talked to her about common acquaintance in the great world where she had once played a conspicuous part he had credited her with all sorts of complicated feelings, none of which she had. He thought that she would hail him thankfully as a brilliant reminder of what she had lost: she was not at all conscious of loss, and did not observe his brilliancy. He had built much upon that, seeing her in his mind's eye cling to him

that she might get back something of the grace which had been hers. Nothing of the kind occurred. She talked of the K——s and the O——s as she might have talked of the Browns and the Robinsons; she seemed to have no historic imagination. She declined to be treated as a woman of fashion, she did not swim in Bendish as in her element.

He shoved off on another tack, and circled about her. He told himself that he was very much in love, and vowed that he didn't care to conceal it. He saw her every day and thought of her most of the night. Verses came easily to him. He wrote of her, guardedly, obliquely at first, and read her what he had done. At first she was taken in. She thought that he had left his heart in England, and wondered what kind of lady had attracted this butterfly lord. Presently, however, she saw that he was adoring herself, very respectfully, and snug in her tower of strength she was amused, and allowed herself to be interested. It's extraordinary how far a woman, deeply and safely in love, deeply and abidingly beloved, can afford to let another man go. Georgiana in this may be blamed by some, but never by me. Love with women is a permanent possession and defence—it is at once treasure and treasure-house. Nothing can touch it, nothing depreciate it. Indeed, tribute from another heightens its value. So this beautiful, watchful, critical woman went about her ordinary business, and left her heart with her Gervase in his mountains or at

his desk, while with a wary and amused eye she watched Lord Bendish at his antics.

Words, words, words! And very pretty words they were—tender, glowing with sentiment, slightly rococo, very insincere, but as complimentary as you please. This went on for a couple of weeks, and then there came a day when he was at her feet, with her hand at his lips. "O you are beautiful! Pity me, I die!" That kind of thing—by a seat in a myrtle thicket.

That was a panting moment. She was pale and very quiet, having quickly regained her hand.

"I think you are forgetting, Lord Bendish."

"I forget God when I see you—." He was still on his knees.

But she was dry. "You forget me too, I think. Please to get up."

"What," he cried, "may I not hope—?" He could not take defeat.

She sickened of him in a moment. "Ah, you may hope—for honesty," she said, and left him. He was deeply mortified, and never forgave her. Had she been honest with him? He felt that she had led him on, which was not true. She had let him go on, which is a different thing—but he couldn't, or wouldn't, see that, and came in time to hate her.

Meantime he withdrew to his house—for he had taken a great house at Porto Fino and kept state there—and was no more seen at the villa. But this was for a very short time. Presently—seeing that Poore was invisible, and Poore's wife only too

visible, going about the business of the house as if nothing had happened—he took to the road, leaving word that he should return, and lumbered into Italy, where I propose to leave him. Genoa, Milan, Florence, Rome, Venice, heard of him. Many distractions assailed him; but it is to be said that he remained clear in his impressions of Gervase Poore and a common enthusiasm. He could not think of Georgiana without disgust, but he was honestly an admirer of her husband's genius—and as such he saw Italy through Poore's eyes, put like glasses upon his own. He saw it too, I must go on to say, "in character." Italy posed for him, but not before he had ardently posed for Italy.

Italy moved him very much. He became a tourist, firstly to distract himself, but soon because he was genuinely interested. He saw everything, read, thought, grew excited. His thoughts became winged words. He returned to his design of a Poem, rehandled his notes, reshaped them, got bitten and began. He wrote fluently, and was elated by what he wrote. The thing grew under him. It was *The Wanderer*. Now it is hardly necessary at this stage to say of *The Wanderer* that it is concerned much more with the writer than with the places in which he wandered. Let that be so, if he had left it at that his fame would have suffered, perhaps—and perhaps that is all we need be concerned about now. But he did not. He was, of course, inherently a rhetorician. He did not feel so much as know what others might be made to

feel. But any stick will do to beat a dog with, and any art—even cookery—may be a vent for the vapours. Here, then, his sense of rhetoric told him that there must be a motive—a *causa causans*, and being the young man he was, the only possible motive for so much passionate discomfort in the presence of nature must be a woman. Therefore a woman looms malefic in the Wanderer's page; and I will do *The Wanderer* this much credit, as to say that he had not the slightest notion how bitten-in as with vitriol her portrait is. He was smarting, of course, from a recent encounter; she was fresh upon his mind; his wounds were raw, gaping at the edges. She might have been Lady Ann, she might have been poor Rose; but she happened to be Mrs. Poore. Therefore Mrs. Poore is the "care-worn Circe" of *The Wanderer*, whose malignant wiles gave so much satisfaction to the noble victim of them that he really might have come to be grateful to her for inflicting upon him woes which could be so luxuriously healed. I doubt if Bendish ever enjoyed himself so much as when in Rome, Florence, Naples, and Venice, he was seeing himself a victim to a false, beautiful, and ruthless woman. Rhetorical fiction! That may be—but *The Wanderer* remains to testify to a bleeding heart. And next to having a bleeding heart in being, to have had one is still food for your rhetorician; and next to that again, no doubt, is to think that you have had one. Be all this as it may for the moment. *The Wanderer* pleased its noble author at the time,

and fully occupied his time, without removing at all from his mind his dream that he might become a leader of men. It served his purpose, which was to rid him, as by phlebotomy, of a fever; and when he had written himself out he felt better, and returned with zest to his ambitious reveries. Returned to Rapallo in the late autumn, he had forgotten all about his verses. Georgiana little knew how near she had gone to accomplishing the desire of her heart. If Gervase had not finished his "Hodgiad" when he did, and had not rekindled in Bendish the fire he had got from him, the young lord had gone home to England and these pages never been devoted to him. But she neither knew nor cared. Bendish, once out of her house, did not exist so far as she was concerned. He had made love to her, it is true; but wantonly, she judged, for the simple reason that the field had been open to him. There had been no hedges to break; the field lay wide to the road. He had looked at it in passing. It was full of flowers, smelt of honey; but they were wild flowers, not worth plucking. She thought him a fopling and forgot him. She was bored, but not at all disturbed by his reappearance.

Just as easily as she had forgotten him, so did he forget his poem, and that she had been the reason of it; but he had not at all renounced his ambitions. He still saw his way to political adventure, and indeed had maintained throughout his travel an extensive correspondence with England, which

assured him of it. The country was full of unease; the excitement of the centre was fervent, but at the circumference explosive. England was like a boiling pot which seethes and heaves in the midst, and at the edges breaks into bubbles. Bendish had letters from all parts of the country, and invited more by the answers he wrote. So far as he could judge, the times were ripe for revolution, and nothing now was wanting but a born leader of men to set a host flooding the country like a tidal wave—that had been his own figure when he was setting Poore afire, and as he spoke it he had seen himself on its crest.

He had his manifesto at the tip of his tongue. If Georgiana had encouraged him ever so little it would have been in England by this time; for Bendish was that kind of man who responds immediately to opinion, and is a good poet if you believe him to be one—or a good anything else. As it was, however, she had chilled him, and he had to wait for Gervase Poore, who didn't fail him, though he very nearly did.

Just in time, as it happened, Poore appeared before him, some weeks after his return to Porto Fino—haggard but illuminated by inner fire. The two poets sprang together.

Poore said, "My poem is done. You shall come and hear me——"

"Let us have it now," said Bendish, "and then we'll dine and discuss our plans."

Poore looked troubled—and was troubled. "I think I will ask you to come to us. I wish Gina

to hear me too—I trust to her judgment. We ought to have that——"

Bendish, having no further use for Mrs. Poore, said plainly, "A man writes for men, unless he is writing about love—and then he writes for women. But as you will. Women don't like politics. They distrust its power over men."

Gervase was not in arms for his wife. He was too much absorbed for that. But he considered the proposition, dreaming over it, searching the blue spaces of the sea.

"My wife is not a woman, I think," was his conclusion; "she's a spirit in person. She reminds me of a flame in a lantern. Let us go to her."

Bendish shrugged. "By all means. Let us go to your lantern and tend the flame. But she won't like this kind of oil, you'll find."

"She will like what is true in it," said Gervase, still in his dream. So then they set out.

She saw them coming up the road from the sea with the level rays of the declining sun upon them. Her poet, taller than his companion, was bareheaded; even at that distance, so well she knew him, she could guess at his mood of intense, silent exaltation. Lord Bendish walked beside him, very upright, very stiff in the head, very much the little great man, as she judged him in her strong distrust. She bore him no grudge for his behaviour to herself, naturally—for no woman ever does. But she feared his friendship with Gervase, and wished him miles away.

The day, which had been one of scirocco, hot and still, was making a thundery close. Copper-edged masses of cloud hung upon the sea; distant buildings—a church-tower, a lighthouse, the Castle on its rocks—stared paper-white. She herself was in a nervous mood, and wide-eyed for supernatural warnings. Even as she stood fixedly watching, with eyelids smarting at the strain she put upon them, an omen flashed across the scene: two long-winged hawks swept before her in flight, dipping, turning, rocking as they flew, fighting and wrangling together. They closed with shrill chattering, their wings beat each other; then they parted, and one wheeled upwards, towered and sped to the sea—the other dipped to the earth and flew limpingly into the hills.

While she was trembling under the excitement of this, the two men were at the gate.

Lord Bendish saluted her with a flourish. “Fair lady, I bring you your poet to be crowned.”

She gave him her hand, which he kissed in courtly fashion. He was in high spirits, not at all traitor to his secret resentment. For if she bore no grudge, he did. He both hated and despised and feared her. His whole personal force was in the scale to sky her up to the beam.

CHAPTER XV

THE BLOOD-PACT

THEY supped, the three of them, almost in silence. There was a tension upon each. Bendish was involved heart and soul in political dreamings. His travels, his poem, his discomfiture were all forgot. For some reason or another he counted greatly upon the support—or opportunity—which Poore was about to afford him. Nothing else, at the moment, seemed to matter. Poore himself hardly ate anything, and nearly all the time had his wife's hand in his beneath the table-cloth. He had the sense of returning, his sheaves with him. He was free, deep-breathing from his labour of six months. If his head was not upon her bosom, his mind was. As for her, she made much of his hand, for she knew what such testimonies meant in his case who was prodigal of them, and entirely careless of outside judgments when his mind was free. He had indeed freed it of its burden now, and was all for returning to her heart and side. So she saw, and knew that the night would bring the renewing of their loves. But she dreaded the ordeal that was first to come, feeling it a bad sign that he had been so secret over his work, knowing almost certainly that he misdoubted of her judgment. But ah, she told herself,

he need not! Did he not know how utterly she loved, how utterly she had merged and drowned herself in him? Her hand nestled in his palm, she laughed softly to herself as she thought, O foolish, noble, godlike Gervase who could suspect her of disloyalty! But all that was over now, for he had come back, and had her hand.

After supper he asked to see the children abed, and she took him to them. Bendish sat on alone over his wine, malignly smiling. Children! They remained away nearly half an hour. Bendish timed them.

Then under the lamp the reading began, went through and was not done till past midnight. Georgiana, in white, in a shadowed corner, motionless, her chin in her thin hand; Bendish at the table, his elbows upon it, his eyes astare, darkly revolving fate and doom; Poore standing to the light, a savage reader, gnashing consonants as if he hated them.

I find it impossible to give an idea of this extraordinary historical poem which so reverses the adjustments of History that Magna Carta drops clean out, and the coming of the Friars Minor is made more of than the exploits of the Black Prince. It is perhaps too much to say that the weather and the revolving of the seasons count for more in it than the Armada or Marlborough's campaigns, or Waterloo; but it is certain that these and the like great events are sometimes lost sight of, while the motions of the sun and moon never are. From his

point of view these things are as they should be. Given his point of view, Poore has got his values exactly right; and that is his crowning achievement in the first part of his book. The shocks and poundings of history have just such a dim and distant sound upon the ear as the rumour of the events themselves may have had upon the pastoral folk who lived through them. There is a harsher, more sinister, more insistent rumour, the burden of Hodge at his servitude:

The under-current to the drums,
The burden which the trampling men
And shrilling trumpets drown in vain—
For still from loom and yard it hums,
And still you hear it far afield,
And down the hillside still it comes. . . .

Hodge afield, abed and at board is his hero. You see the fellow grow as you listen. He gets your conviction. For good or ill, at the end you have a man before you—a man with whom, as you have made him, you will soon have to reckon. You have him whole: such as he is you have seen him grow; such as you know him now, you can guess what work he is likely to make.

Your first impression is one of strangeness. Yet there are great beauties in the poem—homely pictures, pastoral scenes, landscape pieces inset, gleams of blue sky and sunlit hillsides seen through rents in the murk or rolling cloud. And hope is never quite absent, nor pride, nor the triumph of pride:—

They shall perish, but thou endure;
Yea, like a garment they wax old;
Thou shalt change them like a vesture,
But thou art the same, thy years untold;
And thy children's children shall hold
The land whereon thou wast bought and sold. . . .

So far he carried Georgiana with him. She was thrilled, she was proud, she was happy. He read these messages in her eyes, but was too much moved himself to need them then. Of the three people concerned he carried conviction most deeply into himself. He became his hero incarnate, but magnified by the height and depth of his own inspiration. He felt in his own person the huge blundering protagonist of his drama. And as such he began immediately upon the Second Part.

Here he becomes prophetic and foretells the revolution which will throne Hodge upon the seat of our foreign kings. No time is specified for this event, and none of the exact means by which it is to be done. There is nothing of Mother Shipton about his Vision of Revolt. He does not anticipate steam traction or electric telegraph. He seems to foresee a gradual rage rising very far off against parliamentary government, rolling like a wave towards Westminster and finally crashing upon it and swallowing it up. He writes of "waves of men, league upon league." There is no bloodshed; apparently the tyrants and their symbols, kings and their sceptres, bishops and their crosiers, parliaments and armies—all simulacra of authority—go

down without a struggle. Parliamentary government is swept away; folk-moots are restored; there is a Committee of Public Weal; the land is resumed and parcelled out among the people; local government is strengthened—he sees beyond the county into the parish; the parish is autonomous in local affairs. Taxation is voluntary, a matter of personal and local honour. He expects, in fact, a general enlightenment and then a sudden illumination which is irresistible. It is easy to travel when you see the way. I am inclined to see an anticipation of the power of the Strike in one passage:—

And the War of Waiting and standing still,
Fighting famine without a cry,
Broad-spread battle from hill to hill—
As if a man in his own blood
Should crown his foe, and hold on high
His own heart for an oriflamme,
And see the rally before he die. . . .

What else can that mean? He has a great passage upon the Rights of Man which I should like to quote, but do not. He ends with a vision of England held by Englishmen. Hodge stands upon a hill, where in the beginning we saw him crouching from the wind, and gazes over England—fold upon fold of it, softly gray and green,

Tilth and pasture and farm-steading,
White villages, red-roofed towns,
Grey manors in folds of the downs. . . .

yours. Let us make no plans yet—it is too soon. Ways will come, and chances; and the men to take them. Meantime let you and me swear brotherhood. If you will take me under you I shall be proud to serve.”

“I’ll take any true man,” Poore said, “and you first of all.” He was entirely serious, and did not take his eyes off Bendish. He had not looked at Georgiana once since he ended the Second Part of the poem.

Bendish had gone to the sideboard and picked up a wine-glass. In it he poured wine till it was half full. He brought that forward now and put it beside them on the table. Then he pulled a short dagger from the sheath at his belt, and showed it to the light. His eyes glittered as he concentrated his gaze upon it.

“A sacrament of fellowship,” he said, with a half laugh; but he was very pale. Gervase watched him, frowning. Bendish pulled up the sleeve of his right arm, and held it over the glass. He stuck the point of the dagger suddenly into his flesh, then dropped it and squeezed his arm. Two or three drops of blood fell into the wine. He looked brightly at Gervase, who suddenly rose, pulled back his sleeve and held his arm over the glass. Bendish drew near, held his arm and looked at it. Gervase watched him, still frowning, and did not flinch when he drove in the point. His blood flowed into the glass. Georgiana sat as one turned to stone. Bendish raised the glass.

"To the Rights of Man," he said, and drank, and handed on the glass.

Poore held it, but said nothing audible; he looked at his wife, hesitation in his looks. Bendish was watching with glittering eyes. Georgiana had turned very white. She saw the glass, she saw her husband's intention, she knew that he called her—she could not do it. She was at the moment the slave of her judgment. Her love called upon her—her judgment did not approve. She turned away her head, as it seemed to her by superhuman effort. Then Poore without another effort upon her drained the glass. The deed—some deed—was done. Things between her and her lover could never again be as they had been before. Bendish had intervened.

To her the act was symbolical; there was nothing left for her to do, but as she did. Her head ached, and her heart was sick unto death. She got up, saying that she would go to bed. Gervase, suddenly aware of her, said, "Yes, yes, go, my love. It's very late and we have much still to talk of." He was very kind, with his hand on her shoulder; but she felt an alien. She lifted him her face—he kissed her cold lips. Then without a word she left the room. Bendish held the door open for her and bowed her out. Then he shut it again upon himself and her husband.

The one thought she had as she undressed herself was, "This evening—before all this began—he was mine. He took me—he was all mine. When he

came home I saw it in his eyes, that he was mine and wanted me. I gave him my hand—he knew, he knew. Then he brought me here, and took me. Never, never again, my heart! But then you were mine!” What had happened since, exactly what had happened she could not now examine. She had neither the heart nor the head; but it was most certain that the ceremony decreed by Bendish had cut a definite trench between Gervase and her. She didn’t realise that Bendish had intended that it should, had been inspired to it by his instinct to work against her; she thought that, in fact, Gervase had cut it himself, that he had been digging as he read. As for the poem, she admired it. It was Gervase’s heart’s blood: of course she admired it. It was not that she couldn’t follow his thought, or not see the fineness of it; not that she hadn’t been moved by it, or cried to herself, Ah, if these things could be! Not at all. As a song it made her blood sting her. But she knew Gervase; she knew his faculty for identifying himself with what he imagined. He would go leaping out, after his poem, into the world. And of course it was all hopeless, all utterly absurd. If he took his poetry into the world, to live and get it lived—she couldn’t follow him. A sense of futility would clog her feet. And he would do it, she knew; and she must watch and agonise.

Standing by her open window, peering wide-eyed into the night, she prayed for him, but without conviction. She was fearful of letting herself go even under the starry brows of her God. Then she laid

herself beside her sleeping boy, not daring to enter again that bed where so lately she had been as a bride. She fell into a troubled doze, tossing herself about, throwing out her arms; but she was deep when he came to her in the gray of the morning hours.

She was right in her certainty that Poore was that dangerous kind of poet to whom the fictions of his heart and brain are facts. He was an idealist of the most naked kind, an enthusiast, of the stuff of martyrs, a dangerous man. What to Bendish was a safety-valve for his vitality, to him was mere light and air. Having once stated Revolution, it became a life-and-death matter to him. He saw nothing else solid in a world of dreams. But, that assumption once granted him, he was very practical.

He said to Bendish, "This poem will never reach the people whom you and I have to work with, but there's a chance that it will reach those who can best reach them. Let schoolmasters have it, and ministers of religion; get it into debating-clubs; let any workman who can read have a chance of seeing it. It is not a thing for the reviews: those who read reviews are convinced already that I am a proper object for the gallows. We gain nothing by having it burnt by the common hangman. Remember that our revolution must come through men who do not vote, and can't hope to vote for another hundred years. The Reform Bill will pass, no doubt, within a little time. If it does, our work will be the

harder. If it does not, which is what I pray for, we shall gain by the discontent its rejection produces. We shall have to speak at election meetings—but we must always speak beyond the electorate. We have to convince the serfs, not the free men. It's the rick-burners to whom we must go, not the town-burners. It's not going to be done within our lifetime. These people have been cowed for a thousand years. They have the suspicion of hunted beasts: they will suspect you and me. I see clearly that you are sanguine of something sudden. My friend, if you can't be patient and work for your grandchildren you had better not work at all. Don't you realise where we stand? We are still ruled by your Norman robbers; but between them and the English there's another great class, more timid, more selfish, more obstinate than themselves. A revolution—the first revolution—will bring them to the top inevitably. The Reform Bill will perhaps do that. Then our work will begin. We must have manhood suffrage, annual parliaments, the ballot before we can hope for another parliamentary revolution. But I still hope we can avoid that. If the Duke rejects Reform, I still hope we can make that sort of reform out of the question."

Bendish listened and said little, but his brain was on fire. He was at his favourite trick of imagining ovations. He saw the breakfast table of Holland House husht while he thundered out Epics; he saw old Rogers working his sour gums together, grudging

the admiration which was forced out of him. He heard Tom Moore's shouts of rapture. He saw the House of Lords—rows of pale faces waiting on his words. . . . "I shall start to-morrow," he told Gervase, then added, "It will make people stare, to have me at this work."

"That can't be helped," Gervase said.

"It may do good." He invited an opinion which he held very strongly himself, but Gervase was too simple to be caught.

"It will seem to do good at first, but in the long run character tells, and not accident. When life and death come into play it won't be your lordship—which means nothing—but your lordliness which will determine the issue."

Bendish moved about. "I suppose that blood counts for something." His heart jumped responsive: of course it did!

"It counts for as much as you have of it," Gervase said. "You will want it every drop." He was too grim for compliments, too fresh with his own convictions.

Put upon his mettle, Bendish took the wisest course. He held out his hand.

"Good-bye, my friend. I shan't see you again. But you will hear of me in England."

Gervase took his hand. "I shall follow you soon," he said. He was dog-tired.

The dawn was gray over the room where Georgiana and the children lay asleep. Poore stood some minutes watching them. He saw that she lay with

the child, and approved it. It was true that something had happened. Bendish, in fact, had happened. He did not even feel the impulse to waken her, to clasp her and learn from her clinging arms whether he had approved himself. He was too sure—from Bendish—that he had, and for this moment of triumph too satisfied with that. He had no notion that anything severed him from her, no suspicion of the tragic significance of her act. All his thoughts of her were tender. So deeply asleep—a child with her child! A pure refuge for him, when need was, from the turmoil, blood, passion, dust and heat to come! He breathed thanksgiving upon her, and stole out of the room, and out of the house into the air. The goatherds climbing up the mountain paths saw him above them, tall and cloaked, erect against the sky.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LORD AS DEMAGOGUE

BENDISH was true to his word. He left Rapallo on the morrow of the pact, but chose for the sea, taking only Mackintosh with him. The rest of his household might travel as it would, or could. A local bark took him to Genoa, where he shipped himself aboard a merchantman. Here, provided with a stateroom and private dining quarters, he played the Exiled-for-opinions to a great tune, keeping himself rigidly apart from those he was coming to redeem. Folded in an ample cloak of black, marble-faced and inscrutable, he sat upon the taffrail and brooded upon the ocean. Mackintosh, prepared for most vagaries, was puzzled by his lordship's present manner. "There's three handsome women on board, and his lordship's not so much as known it—not so much as called their attention. . . ." It was Mackintosh's private opinion that his lordship, at the moment, was "in the skin" of Mr. Poore, of whom he had seen so much at Rapallo; and Mackintosh was right. Bendish, never really happy unless he was trying to be something which he was not, or to get something which somebody else had, was a very chameleon for lapping up atmos-

phere. Just now he was filled with a sense of Poore's power of conviction, swiftness of grasp and singleness of purpose, all of which, as he had observed, resulted in a fine abstraction from the affairs of this world. He was more filled with that than with what they were aimed at; but it did very well. The handsome women preened themselves in vain in the sun. He had no more eye for them than Poore would have had—or so it certainly seemed to them.

Abstracted he remained until the dim cliffs of England loomed low down in the northern sky; and then he became feverishly alive, and as he had to talk to somebody, he fell back upon Mackintosh. He gave that subservient functionary to understand that he intended to stay a month at least at Castle Bendish, where he had never yet stayed for two nights together in his life. Mackintosh was to proceed thither at once and put everything in order. "I shall have several guests," his lordship said, "political gentlemen, I fancy. There will be no women—at least, no ladies. You had better take Wimble down to see about the horses—though probably we shall walk a good deal." At this surprising contingency Mackintosh blinked. "And see to the wine, will you, Mackintosh? We shall want plenty of wine—claret and burgundy mostly. And a good deal of brandy—just see to all that. Then—let me think— Oh, yes, of course. I wish the gardens to be seen to. They ought to be in good order, you know—and the park too. I shall probably have

some public meetings down there— I shall throw the grounds open two or three times a week. It must be made proper for that kind of thing. Get in whatever men may be necessary, and have it all in first-class order by the autumn. Servants? You'll want a great many servants. Mrs.—what's my housekeeper's name?—ah, Mrs. Timmins—she'll look to that. I'll see Mr. Heniker directly I am in town, but you had better not wait for that. Lambert will do for me while you are away. I shall have to give some dinner-parties—which is a bore—but that can't be helped.”

This was the beginning of commissions for the unfortunate man which hardly ceased until the vessel stood into the Thames. He thought of some new diversion for the political gentlemen every hour of the slow day. Mackintosh took their general sense to be that Castle Bendish was to be thrown open for a house-warming or something of the kind, with no expense spared. Beyond that he did not inquire; but Bendish found his “Very good, my lord,” soothing to the nerves. He would have had them in plenty if he had gone on to expound his present political doctrines, which insisted upon the emancipation of Mackintosh and the likes of Mackintosh, and the obliteration to their advantage of all the lordships in England; but I think that he dimly perceived their incongruity. At any rate Mackintosh was spared such liberality of assent.

But Roger Heniker was not. Summoned to St. James's Street within a week of his patron's arrival,

he found Bendish at the opening of his campaign. The *Vision of Revolt* lay upon the table, and wet sheets of an "Address to the British people" in an upright hand littered the floor. Letters, unfolded and unsealed, were abundant, and another was in progress. Bendish looked up from his task and hailed his visitor.

"Ha, Roger, my dear fellow! You find me hard at work—by the by, you must get me a secretary as soon as may be. I can't think and write letters. There are a thousand things to be done at once—the Epic to print—meetings to arrange for in the country—the House—Castle Bendish (Ah, I must speak to you about that—don't let me forget—). Then I'm busy with a Manifesto—look here," he held up the dripping sheet. "Listen to this—

"For nothing is more certain than that your tyrants are calling up reserves with which to bind your chains closer about you. What, pray, can the enfranchisement of two million employers of labour mean to ten million driven slaves but so many pliers of the whip and goad, so many stewards and overseers of injustice and oppression? If you submit to it, the name of Englishman is gone, and with it the hope of the free. Let them go, however, on such terms. But if your servitude began with the landing of the Norman upon your shores, your hope has endured until now, when, I tell you, its justification is within the hollow of your hands. . . ." He flicked a page or two, then threw the whole aside, and took the Epic in his hands.

"There's good reading here—but you don't feel poetry. I spare you." He turned over the sheets in sections. "You shall try some of the Notes. By heaven, they ought to move you. Listen to this one, on the House of Commons: 'An Assembly, chiefly self-elected, which can interrupt urgent business—business of life and death to you and your families—to consider whether a man is speaking with a hat on his head or in his hand must either be in senile decay, or so youthfully exuberant as to be wholly unworthy of your credit. It matters not to you or me how it is become frivolous, if frivolous it is. Away with it. . . .' Damme," said Bendish, "that's Poore all over; but it's devilish good."

Heniker's jaw was square—it jutted. "That's scandalous, Bendish. You'll get him into trouble for that, if you let it go."

Bendish cheered. "'Vogue la galère,' old Roger! Trouble is what we want. We're for pikes and barricades. Listen to this one:—

"'A coronation will inspire a sentimentalist of imagination and sympathy to the highest flights of emotion of which he is capable. "Te Deum laudamus" on any such occasion will draw the tears to his eyes. The King in question may be a little wind-bag, as was Louis XIV. of France, a sack of blubber and pretence like our George IV., or a brigand like Napoleon; but the sentimentalist will magnify the man crowned at the expense of the kingship conferred, take out of kingship a part of its essential glory and pour it like a sacring oil upon

a rogue's head. But your pure idealist, who exalts, because he sees it excellent, kingship itself, and realises the King because he sees him naked, is morally shocked at the tragic travesty. He fights his way out of church into the air and cries to the people, "What in the name of wonder are you about? Will you crown a hog? Will you prostitute a holy thing to make more hideous a vile one? What man among you is worthy of kingship? Let each man ask himself. Yet because you desire a king, you lift up this son of his father and teach yourselves to believe that his office will ennoble him. You say, 'He was foul half an hour ago, but now he is glorious.' I tell you that you lie to yourselves, and make this wretch the victim of your vice. . . ."

Roger listened with blank dismay. "Quem Deus vult perdere." . . . Was Poore mad? Had Bendish ravished his mind? Or was Poore the devil? Or was it Bendish? He had liked Poore. He remembered the flushed face of the tall, stooping poet; he remembered his beautiful pale wife. Good Heavens, here was a kettle of fish! But he didn't attempt to argue with Bendish. He knew nothing could come of that.

Meantime the youth had stopped, for Heniker's plain face did not encourage him to proceed. . . . "That must be broadcast over the country within the next few weeks—meantime I am getting out my Broadside first, and seeking alliances high and low. To-morrow I breakfast at Holland House. On Thursday Burdett, Hunt, and some of the politicians

dine with me. Then I must go to Castle Bendish and open the eyes of the country. The hunt is up, Roger, I tell you! What was it old Latimer said? . . . 'We shall this day light such a candle in England' . . . I'm in very good fettle, as you see. There's nothing like hard work to put a man right with himself. If I can only keep away from women, I shall leave a name behind me. How do you contrive to keep out of their meshes, hey, Roger? To me there's a lure in their die-away glances that's—well, thank God, I am too busy even to look out of the window. . . . I assure you, I can walk up Bond Street now without knowing there's a petticoat in it. . . . And yet men of action, they say, have always confessed to the power of that sex. . . . Nelson, Napoleon—ah, and Caesar, Alexander, Pericles . . . ! Now—as I said—I can give you half an hour, so let's to business. I must see Murray at noon about the Epic. That's urgent. So fish out your parchments, old fellow, and make the most of me. . . ."

Here was Bendish in a hopeful mood, which a *tête-à-tête* dinner with Tom Moore certainly did nothing to minish. This was a great meal. There was nobody like Tom to draw the best out of a man: he drew everything out of Bendish, the best with the worst. Out came the love-affair with Georgiana Poore, but with the name left out. She figured as "a woman I met in Italy." "There was a haunted, frail look about her—a sidelong call of the eyes, which drew me on. . . . I confess that I can't stand out against your slim pale women. . . ."

Tom shut his eyes, compressed his lips, and nodded. *He* knew! He could love them all; but if he had a preference it was for the more exuberant type. And yet he had been a slave of Mrs. Lancelot in her heyday.

Bendish moistened his lips. "I loved her, Tom . . . oh, madly . . . I own it. . . . And she led me on . . . and on. . . . And then, by God, she played the prude. Sir, I was damnably hurt. I left her without a word . . . I went . . . I roamed the earth . . . a wounded beast . . . as you say, "ὥστε λῆς ἡγρένειος. . . ." Well, it's over. But it set me writing. I used my heart-strings for a harp. . . . Wait a moment." He went to his desk, and produced a bundle of papers. "Take this home with you. I call it *The Wanderer*. God knows what you'll make of it. I believed in it once—and it did me good. Now I'm home for action. I'll show the world what I can do. Poore and I met—and produced this red-hot stuff. . . ." It was now the Epic's turn.

"Jesus!" cried Tom, "here's activity. Why, Bendish, you're a volcano, not a man."

"Most of this is Poore's; but I've done a flaming preface—and added considerably to his notes. Moreover, the idea is mine. I put Poore to it. But he was at it for six months while I was——"

"Enslaved by Calypso in an island! But—so you met Gervase and set him afire! And you mean to tell me that you were proof against his lovely wife!" Tom held up his hands.

So it was that Bendish, having discovered his friend was in the dark, thought it well to let him stay there. "His wife? She doesn't exist for me. I assure you, Tom, I can be serious. She lives in her children, I believe. We had nothing to say to one another. . . ." He frowned. "There was a woman, as I told you, who singed my wings. . . ." Here he looked pained. "Enough of her. Let her rest—she has her reward. I can't grudge it her. You'll find her in *The Wanderer*, if you care to look it over. Damn her—she made me suffer. . . . But now to the Epic. It's great, you know, Tom. Poore's a strong arm. Now listen to some of this. Ballad-jingle, you may call it: doggerel, you may call it even. By Gad, sir, he's called the right tune for rural England."

He began to read—fitfully, here and there, as the fancy took him. He read well, with devilry, and with conviction, which grew as his mind caught fire. The spirit of Poore entered him, and he caught up some of Poore's fierce tricks—his digging at consonants, for instance. Those were days when poetry still flamed, and men were still kindling-wood. Tom, who had a genuine love for Gervase, was greatly moved by the *Vision of Revolt*, though very sure that Mr. Murray would have nothing to say to it. "'Tis not to be expected, Bendish, my dear. Murray swims with the gold-fish in still pools; he's got a gleam on himself—you'll find a scale or two of the precious metal. And with his *Quarterly παρὰ μνηρῶν*! Take it across the way, my dear. Longman will

swallow it whole—though the King's Bench and the Attorney-General yawn for him. Let me have that bit again . . .

He sees therein his homely God
With earth-clods clinging to his side . . .

how does it go?

And while he hymns the King of kings
And high Te Deum. . . .

Bendish, you have lit a candle with your flint and tinder. . . ." Which was just what Bendish had told Heniker.

The Manifesto, signed "Bendish," was in the printer's hands that day. The Poem with the Preface, signed "Bendish," and containing, with much lofty rhetoric about it, a rather too urbane patronage of "my ingenious friend Mr. Poore"—that too was arranged for—but not with Mr. Murray. The conclusion of the preface was thought very fine:

"I know not what the issue of Mr. Poore's 'Vision' and of my own conclusions upon it may be. I abide by what I have written, and am prepared to defend it. My forefathers fought at Hastings, and fenced about with steel the land which was another's inheritance—at least, the antiquaries tell me so. If it be my lot to side with those who break down these hedges, so be it. They have served their turn, and I, for one, have done with them. By so much the less as I am a tenant *in capite*, by so much the more

I claim to be an honest man. And so the whirligig of time brings his revenges." Then, in large type,—
"BENDISH."

The proofs were to go through Bendish's hands; he was to have them immediately, he was told. No narrower promise would allay his present fever. So much for the first week of his return to these shores.

But Holland House gave him a check, and not Tom himself, who was present, with his infectious gallantry, could find him a line among the academic whigs of that breakfast-table.

Holland House was not prepared for Poore's short way with Parliaments; but it gave Bendish his head and allowed him extracts from the "Vision." He read with fire and conviction. The table heard him out.

At the close there was a heavy silence. Then Lady Holland coughed and looked down the table. This was a cue. Sydney Smith leaned forward, flushed in the jowl.

"I'll give your lordship a title for your friend's Apocalypse," he said. "You shall call it 'Beyond This Last.'"

"And dedicate it to Gifford, who'll be delighted," said Mr. Rogers with a rasp in his throat, and a look about him to see how his shot had told. Now Mr. Gifford was fabled to have been bred up a cobbler, and so was fair game. But Holland House took good shooting for granted.

Mr. Allen said nothing; but he blinked, and looked as if he might be profound or witty at any moment.

Bendish was rather put out. Tom Moore jumped into the fray.

"Too bad, too bad. Is Gervase Poore to be the only poet kept out of politics? May Mr. Wordsworth be heard on Cintra, and Bob Southey call Wat Tyler his brother, and poor Gervase not have opinions? 'Tis not in reason. The fine young man's full of opinions."

"As a bladder of wind," said Mr. Rogers. Bendish, looking very much the Norman imp, now said haughtily that his friend's opinions were his own, and that he was prepared to defend them here or elsewhere.

"In Another Place?" he was asked. This was from Lord Holland in his wheeled chair, raising his fine eyebrows at his brother peer. Bendish looked the questioner down, through glimmering lids.

"Certainly, I shall defend them from my place," he said, "when the time comes."

Lord Holland bowed. "The time will undoubtedly come," he said. "I shall hear you with interest."

"It will make poor Charles Lancelot rise from *his* place," some one thought; but this was denied.

"Charles! Did you ever know Charles give up place?" Here a lady tossed her feathered head.

"He gave up one place, I understood——"

"He was translated, my lady, let us put it——"

Lady Holland put an end to this. "No harsh judgments, I beg. I always liked her."

"That's in her favour!" cried Tom. "Brava, my

Lady! She was a lovely person—and so she will be now, I'll warrant her—with her children at her bosom." Then he chuckled. "'Beyond This Last'! Good for you, Doctor. I'll remember that for Bowood. But, for all of you, I'll engage that Poore is heard of one of these days. . . . And he snatched the rose from the cap of the greatest man in England—you'll not forget that. Nor will the great man, I fancy. They tell me he's inconsolable."

"But," cried her ladyship, "he'll console himself, or let her console him when they come back! For I suppose your friend means to preach his absurdities in person?"

Bendish implied stiffly that that was Poore's intention.

"Very well, then," said her ladyship, "that will do very nicely. While the husband is thumping his tubs, the Duke will be making love to the wife. And it will begin all over again."

But Moore knew better. "No, no, my lady. You're out there. Gervase swept her out of Wake House like a fiery wind, and she'll never go back. Now I wonder if you remember a certain ball there. 'Twas a year—maybe two—after the Duchess died. I know the Lancelots had been in the house a year. Stay—I'll fix it for your ladyship. 'Twas the year that Lady Geraldine O'Meara ran away with Jack Pixton—and 'twas at that very ball that she danced with him first. Are you there now? Ye are? Very well then: now 'twas Gervase's first introduction into the great world—and 'twas I got him the card

from the lady herself—*Nausithoë* he called her, a pretty name for her gallant breasting of the waves of this world! Now I went to his lodgings dressed in my best to take him along with me—and my hackney-coach at the door—and find him in his shirt and breeches writing verses—‘Laggard!’ says I, ‘and the daintiest lady in London straining her fine eyes to the door for your coming.’ ‘I’m writing about her now,’ says he, and wouldn’t budge. And he was telling her in flaming metre what he thought about her and what he was going to do with her—and bedad, he sent me packing, and finished his screed in his own time, and read it to her at Wake House that very night—and their first meeting, that was! Oh, but Sir Walter himself never figured a bolder young man! Now, my lady, if such a youth takes a fancy to England, and falls in love with her, it’s not the House of Lords will stop him from picking her up. So ‘Lovers, beware,’ I tell the Duke when next I see his Grace.”

Her ladyship, with whom Tom was a favourite, twinkled at his high-flying. “Bring him to see me when he comes,” she said, and Tom made her a fine bow.

“I’ll do it, ma’am, though I die for it, and give England a chance. ’Tis a wayward eye he has, and a susceptible heart. But your ladyship’s is infinitely benevolent—and who knows?” Her ladyship swallowed even this with complacency.

At this rate there was not much to be made of the Whigs. Bendish had himself swept away in his

carriage, where he sat with folded arms, looking uncommonly like Napoleon after Waterloo. But opposition of the sort settled his back. It was neglect or indifference which stung him to folly. For all that, it was a check.

He did not fare much better with the Radicals. He had Sir Francis to dine; he had Vipont, the intransigent member for Midport; he had Lord Sandgate and Lord Stanhope; he went into the highways and hedges and fished up Orator Hunt, who got very drunk and shed tears after dinner. He leavened them with Tom Moore, and another Mr. Hunt, Mr. Leigh Hunt, the Liberal editor, who had been primed with the "Vision" already and admired as a poet what he deplored as a politician. The dismay of these worthy men, when Bendish hinted at his friend's plans, should have been comical to a detached observer, who would have been able to discount the possible mischief by allowance for the *naïveté* of the proposals. These plans, he told them, Reformers to a man, contemplated with great satisfaction the almost certain rejection of the Bill by the Lords, and proposed, with that in view, a popular demand for a share in government which should sweep away the Estates of the Realm and substitute a National Committee of Delegates chosen by ballot upon a basis of manhood suffrage. The King, too, Bendish thought, should be elected, upon the Anglo-Saxon plan. You need, as I say, to be detached, not to say fond of abstraction, to be captivated by this kind of thing; but Sir Francis

was not at all detached just then, and was therefore very much concerned. It is probable that Sir Francis was shocked. He had been too long in the House of Commons to conceive of salvation outside its provision thereto. How could you have salvation indeed, until it had been read a third time? He entrenched himself within the Constitution like any Whig. No such plan as the poem foreshadowed, he roundly told Bendish, could have his support. It thwarted the will of the people.

"How so," said Lord Bendish, "when, on your own showing, the people are not yet represented?"

"My lord," said Burdett, "they are at our back."

"Tradesmen," said Bendish. "They are not the people. They exploit the people."

"They are entitled to be heard, my lord."

"By all means. Let them join in the chorus. But your Bill makes them soloists. Now we say that they are harder masters than the landowners."

Sir Francis frowned very slightly, and shook his head. "I cannot, I fear, lend myself to Mr. Poore's generalisations. I adhere to the Constitution, which, in my view, is dangerously strained by the Tory party, but not to breaking-point. In its defence I go all lengths—but not to its destruction. And I trust the merchants and farmers of England. Commerce is our backbone. Self-respect is founded upon property, and property upon integrity. Mr. Poore is a visionary, and nourishes himself upon the dreams of the French—which they themselves have found to be a yeasty fare. That is not our English way."

Orator Hunt, mellow with wine, cheered him. "There speaks the Tribune of the People! There speaks my friend and my leader! My lord, I say, God bless the House of Commons! The proudest title a man can look for in this country is that of M.P." Then he went on to speak of the Yeomanry of England, our spine and marrow, and proposed its health with three times three. But nobody took any notice.

Mr. Vipont said nothing, Lord Sandgate said nothing. Lord Clanranald, a fiery-haired, square-faced man who had been a sailor, some said a buccaneer, in his day, agreed with Bendish. "Party is master," he said, "the House of Commons servant. The thing will be made worse instead of better by the Bill. We all know that. But what are you to do? They've set their minds on it. It has taken thirty years to get it there—and how are you going to get it out again and something else in its place in three? They won't rise.—I know them. You may get a few more ricks burnt in the country and a few more windows broken here—there are always people to be had who enjoy that kind of thing—but you'll do no more—under a century. We don't fire ricks for better ideas in England, but for better wages. You are perfectly right, however—or your poet is. The House of Commons is the thing to sweep away. You'll never do anything while that lasts. It's too old and too childish at once. If I were younger, and not a husband and father, as thank God I am at last, I'd be with you, trailing pikes. We all know that you're right, I believe——"

Sir Francis shook his head, but Lord Sandgate's dark eyes glowed—however, the speaker turned off what seriousness he had had into an easy pleasantry.

"But you've come among men of forty, my dear lord," he said, "and you must find men of thirty or less. You can't make revolution after thirty. Digestion means too much to you——"

Bendish found himself speechless among these gentlemen, to his extreme annoyance. The reason was simple. He could only be what he was believed to be. What added rage to impotence, however, was that they treated Poore throughout as the man to be reckoned with. Again, the reason was simple. Poore, however ridiculous, was in dead earnest; Bendish, however much in earnest, was afraid of being ridiculous.

But for the present he persevered. The Manifesto came back from the printer's; he drank freely of his own eloquence and was greatly moved. "By God, I have 'em!" he told himself. "By God, I have 'em!" *The Vision of Revolt* looked cold and lumpy, like a stale jelly-fish, beside this reeking thing—wet with ink, though its blood was no wetter.

He read it again, and would not alter a line—he liked its very defects. Here was an awkward relative: let it stand. Here was a limping simile—it was the nearer to nature! He sent it to be struck off and distributed among his agents. They were not, in fact, his own agents; but had been found for him by his secretary, who had been found by Heniker. Bendish could not get out of the way of doing

his work by deputy. "Get that thing printed off, and published," he said in his lordly way. That was done.

"BEYOND THIS LAST."

AN ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND

BY

LORD BENDISH

was in the newspapers within a week. The title was very happy. Holland House was stirred. Mr. Allen said, "This should never have been written." Sydney Smith saw his joke forestalled. That had been really clever of Bendish, and the wit had the wit to laugh at himself. *We* could never afford it.

I don't know that it was taken seriously; but it was talked about, and its author even more so. *The Billiad* was re-read. Ladies asked Lord Bendish to evening parties. He became a popular Revolutionary—among those who cared for revolutionaries and thought little of revolution. These, they said, were not possible in England. But a revolutionary never came amiss to an evening party.

The Duke of Devizes read it after breakfast, standing by the long window of his library, dressed for his morning ride. His keen blue eyes twinkled. "Master Poore has had a hand in this," he thought to himself. "I should like to know what my poor girl thinks of it all."

CHAPTER XVII

THE GAME AND THE PIECES

ON that morning of Bendish's departure Georgiana had risen at six and left Poore deeply asleep. It must have been near five when he had come in and thrown himself as he was upon his bed. She had feigned sleep in her misery, but the fact that he had stooped over her, watched her closely and then kissed her cheek had gone near to lose her reserves. He fell asleep the moment he was down, and presently she stole away tiptoe, and did her washing and dressing in the closet next door. She got the children up and out on to the loggia where they were to play while she boiled their milk and made herself some coffee. While all these domestic affairs were getting themselves done with her usual neatness and light touch upon them, her mind was full of care; but there was the memory of that kiss to comfort her. She clung to that, and made desperate play with it. But foreboding lay upon her heart like a memory of dread. She felt sick with nerves. Breakfast over, she took her children with her, one in her arm and one by the hand, and sought the deep of the garden, where it still lay shadowed from the sun, where the air still had the freshness of dawn in it, and a little brook came tinkling over

rocks on its way to the river and the sea. By that she sat herself and, deliberately confronting it, mused over her affair.

She knew her poet through and through, for though she loved him for his very faults, which made him what he was, she was cool enough to judge whither these might lead him if he were not guided. A woman can always judge the man she loves, for love is to her a possession and not a need. She holds it—it is a vantage-ground, and having that safe, she can look about her and take observations. So far, as she saw, Gervase had been content to express himself in Art—except once, and that was when he expressed himself by running away with her. But since that she and art had filled up the bowl of life—deep draughts of love had been taken, and the issue had been much burning poesy. Four wondrous years they had had—a four-years' honeymoon—and now, it seemed, he was on the edge of action, and of action which could only hurt him, and was doomed by its very gallantry to complete failure. She felt as she sat here alone, her chin cupped in her hand, frowning as she looked down at her tossing foot—she felt that she could bear any hard measure the world might mete out but that Gervase should try a thing and fail in it—fail, that is, in her eyes; for the opinion of the world she cared nothing. The world had been deaf to his music—but she had heard it: but now if he adventured after Lord Bendish in this political quest, whether the world saw him or not, admired him or not, she would see him

futile and absurd—and she could not bear that. It would be as if she watched him strangle love with his own hands. Let him do what the spirit bade him, in God's name; but let him succeed. She could not afford that he should fail. Now in this business she knew that he must fail.

She was not a politician—no woman is; but she had lived in the world where politics is the air of the room, and she knew what could be done, and what not. The Reform Bill would, of course, be carried. Her friend, the rigid old buckram Duke, must give way sooner or later—but there could be no revolution. Neither Gervase nor a House full of him could bring that about. His *Vision of Revolt* was vitiated for her by that one fact, that he had seen what was not there, and prophesied what would never come to pass. He might sing himself to death—but there would be no Revolt. She had heard him read that part of it overnight with a sick heart. Splendid failure, generous blunder! Alas, for such noble, pure-hearted, single-hearted heroes. Crucifixion is the end of them—and for her the foot of the Cross.

Judging him, with a bleeding heart, she judged the other, but with scorn. Poore, her poet, was indeed what Bendish thought himself to be, a man of a single idea. One idea filled his mind at a time, and he pursued that to its death, or his own. That was how Lord Bendish flattered himself he did also, but it was not so. She knew his kind, her world had been full of them. Side by side with any idea

hunted by Bendish went, in the mind of the huntsman, a clear image of Bendish in pursuit of it. If *that* got blurred, or was made ridiculous, the chase of the other was abandoned; but you could never make Poore ridiculous in his own eyes, or baffle him, because he never saw himself at all, but only the thing he was chasing. That made him a much more redoubtable hunter—might, and very often did, make him an infernal nuisance. It brought him also, upon occasion, to enormous grief, as will be seen. It made him possibly a very fine poet—and I have no doubt about that; it made him certainly an impossible politician, because he, viewing his single idea, came in conflict with men who could see half a dozen ideas at the same time. Like Patroclus, who thought of nothing but the slaying of Hector, he was liable to be struck by Euphorbus unaware. Then, while he was turned half about, maddened by a flank attack, Hector jumped in and despatched him. All this she saw, and that some such by-blow must be the end of her Gervase, and the end of her; but long before the tragic crisis came, Bendish would be safely away, making love to some man's wife. As this particular image came into her mind, her eyes concentrated and grew bitter-bright. The wretch had been tender with her; and Gervase knew nothing of it. She had never said a word of it for reasons which, at the time, had seemed to her excellent. Now she was not so sure. If she had told him she had murdered *The Vision of Revolt*. And had that not been merciful? . . .

Meantime she saw that she could not yet go to England, whether her old friend needed her or not. Too much was at stake. Gervase in England atop of his Poem was an impossible thought. She foresaw, with desperate certainty, every stage of his ruinous chase. He would spend himself like the wind among the trees, lash himself to pieces like waves against the black rocks. He would be reviled, hounded about, persecuted, arrested, tried, pilloried—God knew what they would not do to him. You see, she knew the Governors of England—while he, her poor boy, knew nothing but the idea. She had lived in the world which thought of idealists as vermin. She did not think of them so herself—that is, she did not allow herself to think so of them; but she was of the world which did, and she could not for her life admire them for futility. A poet who tried to realise poetry must be futile. Revolution in England must be futile. She was no Pharisee, with rancour in her heart; but, like Pilate, she was of the ruling class, and had learned to wash her hands of Jacobins.

She thought now with a half-humorous pity of her Gervase, as if he was her son rather than her lover and spouse. Dear, generous, wild, absurd boy—she must save him at any cost. Her eyes were misty, but her lips smiled. She looked very wise as she sat there, nursing her chin, looking into the eddying water.

A quick footfall startled her. She turned about quickly and saw Gervase coming. The morning was

in his face. She saw that something was there which had not been there yesterday, and that something had gone from it which had clouded it before. It called her up. She left her rock and went to meet him. His eyes were alight as he met her, clasped and kissed her. They said nothing but with their touching lips; but she knew by the way he held her all he had to tell her. Instantly she surrendered. He was her lover and lord. He must do as he must. . . . He must do as he must—yes; but she must coax him to do as she would. And that would be easy if he was still hers. It would be a game, a serious game—but how she would revel in the playing of it!

When they had breakfasted and the children were abed, the game began. He, with that sense of freedom and enlargement which the accomplishment of a task always gives a poet, talked freely of his work—more freely than for some months. Her relief to have him again in undivided communion hid up her latent disapproval. Her heart consented to him though her judgment did not. He said that it would be well if they went to England as soon as might be. First of all, she wanted to go—and she did not for the moment attempt to deny it. Then there was the poem to be put through the press; there might be work consequent upon its appearance, for another thing. He might have to face prosecution—who knew? At any rate, he was in dead earnest, he assured her, and intended to do what he could to bring his visions to pass. She had

guessed as much, but was very faint in her opposition. The time for opposition was not yet, nor the way of it plain. She was held by his arm, her head against his high heart. "Dearest," she had murmured, "but what can you do?" He had laughed as he replied, "Why, very little." And then she found, to her relief, that he took a soberer view of himself than she had imagined in him.

"The Reform Bill will pass, of course," he said, "in spite of your Duke; no intrigue can stop it now. It will threaten a sterner tyranny upon the English than they have ever known, because it will be that of their own race. A rich Englishman is a harder master than a rich Norman any day. The House of Commons will be filled with successful business men. Government will be by Boards and Committees far more inaccessible than any peer or country-gentleman, and far more doctrinaire. The work of anybody who has liberty really at heart is behind the reformed House, and all that he can do at present is to make the poor discontented. Even that will take a couple of generations, for they are used to oppression, and don't understand that they have any rights at all. Duties they see, but not rights. Imagine, my love, of this task. To convince a nation of slaves, who have been slaves for a thousand years, that they have voices! Yet how can one be convinced of that, and not dare say so? How can one have the face to write that, publish it, get it read by the ruling caste, and shrink from telling the ruled that they are free the moment they choose to say

so? Impossible! A man denies his God if he denies the revelations his God sends him. No, no, I am not a renegade. I have always done what I thought proper to be done. Can you deny that, knowing what you know?" He stooped to meet her eyes, but she would not look at him then. She snuggled the deeper, on the contrary, and listened, knowing her time would come.

"There was a moment," he went on, "when I thought that my work was done by writing what came into my heart; when I thought I might leave action to Bendish. That moment has gone, and the thought with it. After he left me, I went up the hill—and saw the sun come up out of the sea. It was then that I found out what I had to do. It will be very little—ridiculous, indeed. Yet one must begin. I suppose I can do what Wyclif did, what Wesley did. Why not? I believe, as they believed; I am young, I am strong; truth is on my side. I am ready to sacrifice everything, except love—and that I can't, for that is myself. When that goes, I go, and my task will be over. But with you, my heart, at home, with you to come to, with your pure flame to cherish, I feel that I can do my utmost. I see my way clear now. I shall go on, and you shall be with me." He turned her in his arm until they were breast to breast; and then she looked at him and saw him inspired. There was that in him which she could adore, but that in him also which could be cajoled. It is only women who can love and criticise in the same long look.

He surprised her next by saying that he had small belief in Bendish. She, of course, had never had any at all, but she had supposed Gervase hoodwinked. But Gervase now told her that he thought every mood of that young man's was dictated by vanity. "Bendish doesn't need to carry a looking-glass about with him," he said. "He finds one wherever he goes—in anybody with whom he is for ten minutes. He turns and poses—and judges exactly by our looks what sort of a fit his new coat is. The slightest opposition will put him out of conceit with himself. He'll throw away—not himself but his looking-glass, and look for another, and try it with new posturings. Now there are plentiful rebuffs in this business—and he won't be able to stand them. May I predict for you what he'll do when he gets to England? He'll arrive filled with ideas—all the bubbles of the broth we've been brewing here will be in his head. He'll exhibit these to his own people—to peers, whigs, parliament men, court poets, pretty women, men of Brooks's and Almack's; and when they take them coolly, and break a few with a little laughter, or a poke of fun—Bendish will be mortified, and out of heart with the thing. I think that, unless he settle with a publisher before he begins to talk, our poem stands a small chance. It will lie in his desk and be forgotten. But I'll make sure of it by writing to Tom Moore. That will ensure it if it ever reach England. But as Bendish must talk or die, I shouldn't be surprised if some chance traveller on the road were the occasion of my *Hodgiad* going into the sea."

She was amazed. All this was so exactly her own opinion.

"Oh," she cried, "how did you find all this out?"

He laughed gaily. "What a dolt you must think me, my love, in your heart of hearts! I think I knew it all after the first five minutes. But, you see, he excited me to work, and so I kept him up as long as I wanted him."

"But last night, my dearest? Your dreadful ceremony—the blood and the glass. I hated it."

"I knew that you did. I was wrong—I was playing. But I was excited. I had been reading—and I had really touched him. He has parts, you know. There's a man underneath. I had got to it. I know that. Well—that excited me—so I played."

She nestled to him, stroked his face. "Oh, you child—you dear, absurd child." He lifted his head out of reach.

"Everything can be made a game," he said.

"Oh, but—" she was serious. "Is all that you have been telling me to be a game?"

He nodded solemnly. "It will be played as a game—but there'll be life and death in it." Then he kissed her. . . .

But at the love-game she was easily his master, as she had need to be whose stake was so much the heavier. She set herself to woo him from the thought of England, and as the days slipped into weeks his hold upon it relaxed. No news came, of course, from Bendish. That was not to be expected;

and every day without news was a gain. What helped her was the root-instinct of penmen that a thing on paper is a thing done. Freedom, that jewel of price, freedom of mind is gained so; and that once caught the fortunate hunter is slow to the yoke again. Poore began to talk of Italy, and she abetted him. Suppose they took ship to Leghorn, and went to Pisa for the winter. Then Florence in the spring, the Baths of Lucca in the heats—there would still be time for England in the autumn. Georgiana recalled Florence to him. Did he remember that it had been there—four years ago—that all their happiness had been planned? He did indeed.

But had she not wanted to see the Duke? For Gervase's sake, she denied it. She should be glad to see him, she said, but could not weigh him against Italy. She thought the game was won.

Then came a letter from Bendish, written in the first flush of his arrival. *The Vision* was in Longman's hands, the preface written, the Manifesto was out. Everything was in train—and when did Poore arrive?

That letter came about the end of November and was very nearly fatal to Georgiana's game. Gervase reproached himself for his slackness, and was for starting immediately. It was no time for half measures. Georgiana played her strongest card. "Dearest, if you feel that you must— But I can't come with you."

He looked at her with sudden shock. "You can't come with me? But what on earth——?"

And then she told him why.

It is very odd that the more in love a man is the less is he able to play this great and noble game.

The Poores went to Pisa by sea, and thence to Settignano, from which terraced village over Arno we shall hear from them again.

CHAPTER XVIII

LORD BENDISH IN FLOOD AND EBB

THE month following the publication of his Manifesto proved to be the very greatest of Bendish's variegated life. It suited him in every way. He was always happier talking about things than doing them; he was happier still when he had other people talking about *him*. For this month, at least, everybody talked about him. They talked at him when he was present, of him when he was not. Even the Duke talked about Bendish, who was brought under his notice as a Reformer who was against the Reform Bill. But what set the Tories chuckling drew rage and dismay from the Whigs. The explosions of their journals were highly complimentary. As for the women, there's no end to the follies that were committed in the name of Liberty and Bendish. He received Phrygian caps, in knitted silk, by every post. He allowed himself to be crowned with bays in one fine house. A certain Lady Hetty offered herself to him as a footman—or anything else he pleased. To do him credit, he declined her. He knew his own weaknesses.

The *Vision of Revolt* was put in hand. There was no trouble about a publisher. It was to have a

Preface by his Lordship, and this document was finally written and in proof long before the Poores left Rapallo. I reserve my comments upon the document for a later page. It was a curious and artful combination of the fiery and the urbane, and did not altogether avoid that pitfall of the urbane—patronage. But there was that very fine passage about Hastings and his ancestry—that still stood. Mr. Leigh Hunt, who honestly loved Liberty, Literature and Lords, saw to the proof sheets. Another Mr. Hunt, the orator, was responsible for Bendish's demagoguery. He was hat in hand before the new Mirabeau the moment success was undoubted, and, so long as he was sure of election, ready to damn the House of Commons with anybody. It was under his auspices that Bendish made his first public utterance. "Come with me to New Sarum, my lord," said the hearty gentleman. "Saxon England will clasp you to her bosom. She's a fine woman, God bless her! and will allow you any freedoms you please." Bendish stiffened his fine head and curled his upper lip at him. "The freedom I desire, Mr. Hunt, is of contract, not of contact." Mr. Hunt swore that this was the best joke he had ever heard—which it may have been.

But he drove down to New Sarum, with Mr. Hunt by his side; and there was a meeting in the Corn Exchange of that city with a great deal of shouting. Reform was by that time the only cry, and Bendish found himself a hero for advocating what he was vowed to prevent. He spoke explicitly

against the Bill; he attacked it with vehemence. Nothing could induce his audience to see what he wanted, and nobody was present to whom his adjurations could have been of value; but he knew nothing of these things. Mr. Hunt acclaimed him as a Tribune of the People, and called him, several times, his noble friend; shopkeepers and farmers roared their applause. God bless Lord Bendish and the Bill! was the cry. The meeting broke up with "God Save the King," and so much for Revolt at New Sarum.

Thence to Andover, to Ludgershall, to Newbury, to Hungerford, and home to London—flags, drums, and speeches everywhere, and everywhere his Lordship and the Bill. Mr. Hunt stuck to his flank like a horse-leech; the farmers waved their hats and thumped with their sticks; beer swam; the Reform newspapers shrilled for the noble young orator; the Manifesto, with its scorn of the Bill and its passion for pikes and barricades, disappeared from view; Party resumed him. It was maddening. In vain he struggled with it. Every speech he made was more emphatically anti-party, and by party the more applauded. Never was a Reformer like his Lordship. The Bill must pass. The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill . . . and so, God save the King! At the close of every meeting, amid thunders of cheering, Mr. Hunt, in a white hat, struck Bendish on the back, and roared above the tumult, "God bless his Lordship and the Bill!" There was enough in this to sicken any Mirabeau.

Bendish returned to his quarters pale and deeply mortified, hoping against hope for a summons to the Tower. He found instead a note (one of many) from Lady Holland, bidding him to breakfast, as if nothing had happened. He received also a belated, enthusiastic letter, beginning, "My friend," from Poore, who was in Pisa, enquiring about the run of affairs. On the top of all this he received a visit from Roger Heniker on business. Anti-climax.

Now it is not to be denied that his exertions in the cause of Ultra-Reform had fatigued him. Enthusiasm was on the ebb. He was tired of shaking hands with Mr. Hunt; and had begun to be conscious that in playing that worthy's game he had been a piece in it himself. Expecting Poore momentarily, he was irritated in advance by his expressive shrugs and scowls, foreseeing that he would shrug and scowl. He was inclined to damn Poore for criticisms which he suspected to be just. Poore, he said to himself, was an infernal visionary. The thing was tolerable in Italy, absurd in England. How the devil could one prevent farmers and shopkeepers from coming to a meeting? And when they came how the devil expect them to understand idealistic anarchy? How the devil could one get the peasantry to come? But Poore wouldn't see that. Poore would have wanted him to trudge from village green to village green like one of the Wycliffite poor priests he was always talking about—and Poore might do it. He could see, proleptically, the gleam of scornful mirth in Poore's hot eyes when he heard of Bendish's recent progress

in Wilts and Berks in a chariot with four horses, and Mr. Hunt beside him in a white hat with a red favour on his breast. To say that Poore was a cockney poet was no answer. He wasn't, to begin with; and there was the Manifesto already upon the town and country; and there were the Preface and the Poem to come. Caught in reaction, he fainted at the heart to realise what was before him.

Instant escape was in his mind when Roger Heniker came to wait upon him, and found him at the breakfast table.

"Look here, Roger," was his greeting, "here's Poore, red-hot, writing about his poem."

Roger's very blue eyes twinkled. "I should say that he had better come home to correct the proofs," he said.

Bendish scowled at his cold bird. "I daresay he had. Well, as a matter of fact, there are none here. Leigh Hunt may have them, but I don't know. I haven't had time to see about them. And I must revise my own Preface, of course. I must have time to reconsider it. I've been away, infernally worried. You know what politicians are. Hunt—! Good God, I wonder we don't pistol ourselves—in fact, we do now and then. But I've been too busy even to do that. He used to slap me on the back, d—his eyes. He must have done it fifty times. I could have taken him by the throat and wrenched out his gullet. Poems! Proof-sheets! I daresay Poore thinks that the world must stand still while his poem's getting printed; but it won't, you know—and he must understand that."

"I should put it to him," Heniker said. "I thought him a very reasonable man."

"The fact is, you know," Bendish said, leaning back and surveying mankind through the window, "there's nothing in that kind of thing. I've tried it lately in the country, and there's no kick in it. They won't hear of anything else. They won't consider it. They say that Reform must go through——"

"Doesn't Poore say so too?" Heniker asked. "I thought you said——"

"Yes, yes, yes; I daresay he does. But there was talk, you know, of working to get the thing thrown out."

"Who talked of that?" Roger asked. He was in a dry mood. Bendish was a little flurried.

"Eh? Why, who should talk of it? Don't play the fool with me, my dear fellow, if you please. I'm infernally out of humour to-day. Now, look here, I suppose you'll be writing to the Poores shortly. Haven't you got some business relations with the lady?" Roger nodded. "I thought there was something. Well, I'll get you to recall my Preface from the printer and hand it over to me. You might tell Poore that I am thinking it over. I suppose— No, that won't do. I was going to say I suppose you couldn't say I was out of town—I ought to be, you know; I'm very much out of health. They've been waiting for me down at Bendish these two months. Eating their heads off. Eh, what do you think?"

Heniker thought he could very easily do that—if Bendish went out of town. Hardly otherwise.

"No, no. I must stay, of course. But you might tell him how I've been driven about. I'll write to him. Tell him I'll write. We must meet, no doubt—later on. He's certain to be over here. I can't say that I think there's much to be done; but, of course, if he wants a meeting he must have it. I hold to any engagements I may have made—naturally. That's my way. But if he thinks that I am going to put my name to a thing that's doomed to failure, he's egregiously mistaken."

"It would only bear the author's name, of course," said Heniker. Bendish started.

"What the deuce do you mean?"

"You refer, I suppose, to Poore's poem?"

"I refer to nothing of the sort. Upon my life, Roger, I sometimes think—I refer, naturally, to my Preface."

"Good," said Heniker. "I'll tell him."

"Tell him what you please," said his Lordship, and yawned, and drank his tea. Then he stared moodily at his friend.

"I think, you know," he said, "that I shall be off again shortly. England don't agree with me. It's all nonsense. She and I will never get on."

Roger chuckled, but said nothing. He was a plain man, and did not realise that Bendish could be at once bored with a thing and bored without it.

"A man can't be simple in this damned country," Bendish went on, querulous. "A man must always do what's expected of him. If he's a peer he must toe the line—or if he's a ploughman. But there are

some things—there's Hunt, for instance—oh, the devil! I was an enormous fool not to have pushed on to the East when I was out with you. But you know me—women, O Lord! *She* was the siren. I listened to her singing—and so it went on."

Heniker now understood him to refer to Mrs. Poore, and concentrated his gaze upon his friend. "Now, you know," Bendish continued, beginning to enjoy himself, "I hold to the full in the right of man to experience in every direction open to faculty. He is the better of it too—all natural right apart. Nor should the woman regret it, for she, after all, is ultimately the gainer. Let him range; give him his fling. If he comes back to her, it is because she has always been in his heart—his strayings and wanderings are actually testimony to his constancy. That sounds to you a paradox? Examine it—you'll find it a truism. Now I suppose that I have sounded the depths of passion as deep as any man, but I declare to you upon my conscience that I shall bring the riper nature to the woman I marry. It will have been annealed, it will have passed through the fire. But she too has rights. I don't forget them. She says, I give my hands, I yield my person, I devote my nature to a man—as such—not to a peer. Naked I go—*simplex munditiis*. Let him too strip himself. What! At birth and at the hour of death all men are equal. It should always be so—and so, indeed, it always is if men could only see it. *You* may not be able to see it, you poor shackled convenience—but I see it, and I accept her conditions—and ac-

cept them, mind you, more logically than she may suspect. I put her to the test, it may be, in the very act of submitting to her own test. For if she say to me, Strip you of your accidental trappings; stand up before me plain George Bendish, the son your mother brought forth, the issue of the love of man and woman—I reply, ‘I do it—the thing is done: I will take you to a land where such frippery is nothing. But do you come undecked also, except with your beauty and honour. Come to me clothed in your innate purity—and don’t cover your nakedness with a wedding-ring.’ If she is the woman I believe her, she will follow me over the world.”

The young man, flushed with his own eloquence, rose from the table and strode to the window giving on to the dusty town. He stood there at gaze, trembling and excited. Heniker, bag in hand, gaped at him. Accustomed as he was to his patron’s vagaries, he was now completely off the scent. Was there—had there been an intrigue with Mrs. Poore? It was hardly possible, but—you never knew with Bendish what there may or may not have been.

He thought this kind of windy talk very outrageous, though he was by no means more squeamish than men of his own age. “I must say, George, I don’t know why you address yourself to me in such a matter. I’m not at all ready to advise you, and to tell you the truth I have no sympathy with it. If you propose to make some lady your mistress, the thing may be done, I believe. But fluid talk about innate purity has a nasty taste to me; and

as for the wedding-ring, you'll find that that is a garment no woman will go without if she can possibly help herself. However—you didn't ask my advice, and I'm giving it you for nothing—which is against my business instincts."

Bendish listened in high good humour. "My dear old Roger, you'd dress every bride in parchments, and tie her up in red tape—I see your point. The Rights of Man are nothing to you, who watch over the rights of property. Either a man has property—and rights, or none—and duties. Either he is owed, or he owes. Pooh! what a world you lawyers have made for us creatures of simple appetites! But there—go your ways—I've done with you. I'll be free of this galley-hulks in a week or so. Off with you and comfort your poet." So Heniker found himself dismissed, and shrugged Bendish out of mind.

He did not know, and could not have realised what a lonely creature this young lord was, how much he needed, and how much fell short of human companionship. Bendish was one of those men with a capacity inferior to his understanding. He saw what fools or bunglers most men were and was not able to do any better than any of them. He was shy and arrogant at once. He was eager for sympathy and yet for ever making it impossible. With sympathy he could have done anything, and yet he would only have it on his own terms, which were exorbitant. He had been set on fire by Poore at

their first meeting; his enthusiasm had burned with a clear flame—until Poore set to work to do something tangible. The moment that happened he began to think Poore a dullard, and he ended by scorning him for an ass. Of course it is true that he had failed to do anything to impress Poore, and that he knew it. There was that side to him. If Poore had sat at his feet he might have run off his own version of *The Vision of Revolt*—which would have been just as good as Poore was able to think it—exactly as good as that. But Poore did not sit there, but instead, at his desk. Bendish was chilled—and drew in his horns.

It is difficult to realise, but quite necessary, how much through his own qualities and the accidents of his birth and upbringing this young man stood alone. He had not one intimate of his own rank in all England. Men, his equals, he had always misdoubted; men, his inferiors, he used, but despised. As for women, he either made love to them, or thought nothing about them. If he made love to them, they gave him his desire, or they did not. If they did—well, then they were husks, not women at all. If they did not, he hated them. Prodigal of others, miser of himself, he was worse-conditioned than Catiline; but the world is wide and full of people—and he had never yet failed of candidates for disbursement.

But at the time of this recorded interview with Heniker, though he was at a low ebb, and lay gasp-

ing, derelict on the sands, he had cast his eye upon a way of escape. To bolt from his *ennui* would not do: he knew that. That would only mean dragging it about with him. But a pursuit with zest might enhearten him to do what had to be done in this dreary business of politics, into which, he now felt, he had been inveigled by Poore. Poore, confound him, had played with his emotions—and so had Georgiana, and he d—d to her. Speechless with rage, he saw these two join the ranks of his unfriends, and just as he felt the cold of this cruel defection, and while his mind, panic-struck, was ranging the universe for one human heart left it to stable in, it lit—in a flash—upon Rose Pierson's, and saw itself stabled there. Instantly the universe became a hideous waste—a place of broken sepulchres—and Golder's Green a City of Refuge again. Why it was that the glowing face and gracious form of this young woman rose before him at the moment of Heniker's entry he had no notion; but so it was—and his harangue about innate purity was directed, of course, at her's, which he intended to attack as soon as might be.

Not, of course, that he put it so, or thought so of it. For the moment he felt himself very simply like a lost soul, and of her bosom as his home. For the moment he knew not where else to turn for the love and adoration which he absolutely must have if life was to be lived at all. For the moment also the security he felt within the aura of her gentle beauty was so blessed and so healing that he was as near

loving her as he had ever been or ever could be. But that feeling was not at all what he understood love to be. In his own sense of the term, he was not in love with her. No passion, no need to hold, was involved. He was intending to go to her for the assurance that he might have her again. But for that, she could wait for him—since she would.

He did not, in fact, go, because he was interrupted. His horses were at the door, his boots and spurs were on, when his friend Tom Moore came bustling upstairs and burst in upon him.

Bendish in a lightning glance saw that his errand was good—in other words, comfortable. “By God, Bendish,” was his greeting, “you’ll break me heart with pride and joy one of these days of grace.”

Bendish flushed with hope. “Why, Tom, what’s the matter?”

“The matter is yourself, me friend and brother—elder brother in Apollo as you are. My lord—” and he thrust his hand into the bosom of his frock, “I lay at your feet the laurel crown in the name of the Camœnæ. *Amant alterna*, does he say? Not they! They’re for the best man of his hands—and bedad ’tis yourself.”

Bendish was ridiculously pleased, and quite unable to conceal it. “You like my—*Wanderer*?”

“Like ut!” cried Tom. “I’ve been bathing me heart in ut. I’ve been wallowing in the honey and wine of ut. O fie, Bendish! Fie upon your politics and stuff. ’Tis to lime your wings. But this is to make you famous, don’t you understand? Gervase’s

Vision is a fine thing—oh, I'll not turn me back on Gervase Poore. No, no, 'tis a fervent, magnificent, wrong-headed young hobbled archangel in a two-pair back—and so he always was and will be. Set him singing his fair Georgiana in his shirt-sleeves, and he'll have the roof afire—more blood to his passion! And his politics are like a south-westerly wind—blustering, with a tingle, and a dash of furious rain. Fine, fine, fine. But for Parnassus—bah! You'll never find a political poet above the foothills of that mountain, except he's a satirist. Dryden's there safe enough—I won't say Butler's far behind him. In me poor way—hem, hem! But you—with your *Wanderer*—don't need to scale the rocks. No, no,—you take the way of the air—the eagle's way. Now see here, Bendish—Murray, the rogue, has put his nose into this—*sub rosa*, you know, *sub rosa*. He's snuffed the savoury gale, and he's agog, sir. Three thousand guineas was named—three—thousand—guineas—named before me who stand here. Take 'em—throw 'em into the draught—fling 'em after the ivories at Crock's—it's all one. You walk before us all. By God and His blessed Mother, me friend, I never thought you had it in you."

There he stopped, beaming, moist in the eye, a blessed little visitor for any poet.

Bendish, blown out of range of his looking-glass, was much affected. He turned away to conceal his tears. He gulped his emotion—but it was some time before he could speak.

When he did speak, he drew himself up, and threw

his head back. "My dear Tom, you are more than kind. I am greatly touched. You are generous—I was hardly prepared for such an outburst—you give with both hands. Of course—I don't mind admitting it—to *you*—a great deal of virtue went out of me into that thing. I had been in love—and you know what that means as well as I do. Never mind how I fared—never mind the lady's pleasure of my suit—you know what women are! There it was. I do think—I always did think—that there was perhaps a something in me—God knows!"

"It's a d—d fine poem," said Tom, having exhausted his superlatives already.

"As for politics and all that," Bendish went on, more at his ease, "I give you up politics. I've had my say—not as I wished it. It's a dirty business, and I'm glad to be rid of it."

Tom looked sharply. "Oh, then you *are* rid of it? I thought you were involved with Gervase. I heard you speak of a Preface."

But Bendish now had everything well in hand. "There was some thought of it. I half promised him something. I can give it him, of course. My opinions are exactly what they were. Poore is all for extreme action, and I——"

"I would be for extreme unction, if I were author of *The Wanderer*," cried Tom.

"Certainly, certainly," said Bendish. "He shall die with the rites of the Church."

Tom said that he would be writing the dear fellow within a day or two, and would gladly play priest

in so pious a work. Then Bendish proposed dinner together, and a visit to Holland House afterwards. Agreed. The chilled horses were sent back to stable, and Rose Pierson pigeon-holed once more.

CHAPTER XIX

A LETTER FROM GEORGIANA

SETTIGNANO, *December 20th.*

MY DEAR DUKE,—You see that we are by some miles further apart, and I have to tell you that we don't expect to be in England for some time. I know that this will grieve you, as it does your friend; but you are so wise that you can understand her even when she says nothing. She can only tell you now that it is far better as it is, and expect you to read what is not there.

Gervase is very well and in high spirits about his *Vision*, which Lord Bendish took with him to England and is to see through the press. Or rather, he *was*, but we now hear that Mr. Leigh Hunt has it in charge, and personally I am very glad of it. It should be out very soon now. I know that you will disapprove of it—for it is political, and you don't think that poets ought to interfere in politics. I need not tell you that it is sincere. You know Gervase so well, and love him in spite of his opinions. I think the first part will please you. It is very beautiful and most touching. He understands the poor. I don't myself know what to say of the *second* part; but am rather afraid of what the critics may say, and of what *the politicians may do!* I know that you will be kind about it, because—perhaps I need not say *why*. You are our friend. I can hardly remember the time when you were not my friend.

Gervase, of course, was very anxious to go to England and take the consequences, whatever they may be. I am thankful to say that I have persuaded him at last to stay here.

The children are so young to travel, and I confess that I shirk the journey just now, for myself. But for him—*though I have not told him this*—it might be dreadful. I am very, very nervous. He wrote his poem straight off, as if with his own blood. I have never seen him so possessed; and the presence of Lord Bendish was so much provocation to him. They excited each other. I don't like Lord Bendish at all, and I cannot imagine that you do either. I should like to know your opinion of him, and dread what you may think of the Poem. All this is a very selfish letter, but I think you will understand. If any harm come to Gervase I shall be very unhappy. I love him more every day, but he requires more attention than the children. To me, of course, nobody in the world, or out of it, could be sweeter or kinder. One great friend comes near him. Between them I shall be spoiled. But it is what he does to himself that I fear. He is unsparing there. He drives himself with whip and spur. Just now he is calm and happy. He goes into Florence every day and sits in front of Niobe and her children. He is going to make a poem about her. Ah, he is safer with the Greeks than with the Anglo-Saxons!

I wish, oh, how I wish that you would come to Florence again, when you have killed the Reform Bill and can be spared. Isn't it extraordinary? Gervase now hopes that you *will* kill it. You will see *why* in the Poem. That is part of his prophecy. But seriously, won't you come and see us? You could hardly stay with us here, of course, though we have a charming house by the church. It is called La Canonica, and belongs to the parroco of Settignano. There is a garden looking right over the Val d'Arno, and shelter from all the cold winds—but no! I can't see you in it. I don't know what you would do with Ingles—least of all, what Ingles would do with himself in such a tiny house. He would say, "I assure you, Madam, there's no place fit to grill His Grace's cutlet in"—and he'd believe it. I daresay it is true too. We live on macaroni and white cheese, mostly. Gervase eats no meat at all. We have had great trouble

about the children's milk; but there is a Princess Rospigliosi in a great villa near by, who has a herd of Jersey cows, and is very kind. We used to meet her four years ago when we were here with you—do you remember? And once before that (at Devonshire House, I think)—still longer ago, in the days when my Gervase used to stand in the street with the crowd—to see me come and go! Oh, my dear friend, the strange, beautiful, dreadful life I have had! Thank God it is all safe now—thank God that *all* who really are concerned in it must understand. For I am sure—in fact, your messenger, and his message *from the other world* proved it—that Charles understood. I cannot tell you what a comfort it was to me that he should have thought of me as he did towards the end. We couldn't possibly accept his gift—but we took the precious part of it.

Yes, Duke, I am happy, and blessed among women—please God I may deserve it by being a good wife to Gervase, and mother to his children. Pray for me always—and God bless you, my best and oldest friend.

GEORGIANA.

P.S.—I am worried about the Poem, and pray that no harm may come of it. They may prosecute! If that happen *nothing* will keep Gervase here—nothing! I detest, and dread, Lord Bendish. I think of him as Gervase's evil genius—and believe that Gervase begins to realise it. My love to any who remember me.

P.P.S. (Written across).—Lord B. hates me. I certainly hope he does.

The Duke stood at his library and tapped his chin with this letter.

“Bendish! A popinjay! I'll bleed him if *he's* been at her. There's something behind all this. Now I'll write to her.”

He went to his standing desk, mended his quill, and began. He wrote fast, in a great sprawling hand.

WAKE HOUSE, 30th January.

MY DEAR GEORGEY—You write a good letter, which I understand very well. As things are with you, you are perfectly right not to travel. God bless you when the time comes.

You may leave Master Bendish to me with confidence. I know more than you do of the young man, though I dare say you know more than you see fit to declare. He's been blazing about town and country of late, spluttering froth and folly. The women run after him—but you know what they will do. If a man is short of a finger they want him for an oddity. They're collectors, these fashionable women. But Bendish is a very pretty fellow, I'll allow, looking in-different well in a flame-coloured stock. He's all red politics just now—but I hear that he's been rather stuffed in the country. A fellow called Hunt yoked him to his car. That's enough to turn a stouter stomach than Bendish's. I saw Tom Moore at a party the other night, who prepared me for a new display of coxcombical fireworks. You're not the only owner of a Poet. Bendish is about to let out in that direction. Tom was bubbling with it.

Now, Georgey, I doubt your Mr. Gervase has cooked himself a pot of trouble. He's not the first poet to do that, nor will you be the first poet's wife to burn your fingers getting it off the fire. I'll do what I can for him: you may trust me. He was never famous for contingency, I must say; but I should not have suspected him of Bendishry. We shall see what we shall see. His blessed Epick is not out yet, or I should have heard of it, seeing it's my business to know everything. I can see very well that you are disturbed, and therefore I hasten to tell you that you have no cause for that. I'm nobody in the political world, of course, being in Oppo-

sition, and likely to remain so by all I can see; but thank God, I'm a somebody with the grandees, and by no means above a job for my friends. I admire your man, as you know. He's a fine Don Quixote of a fellow and makes a brave figure out in the sun. He and I used to understand each other, and so we shall again. If he tilts against some of my windmills I'll pick him up and give him the free run of my vinegar and brown paper, but he'll know as well as you do that I can't stop the mills to oblige him. Tell him I said so.

He stopped there in his writing, and stood staring into space. Every word he had given her had his love behind it. He had always loved her, and the older he grew (and he was an old man now) the more he wanted her, and the less able he felt to cope with desire. He told himself that he doted—he said he was going to be that unholy spectacle, a fond old impotent. But by that very plainness of dealing he knew at the bottom of his heart that he was not.

He resumed his pen.

Georgey—(he laughed here at his fondness for writing her name. There was a caress in the act—it was like touching her)—Georgey, do you stick to him whatever happens—through thick and thin. If he's going into action, where the stones and mud will be flying—trust him, believe in him. You don't suppose that I've any sympathy with his notions—I think them all moonlight—but they won't do a ha'porth of harm to anybody, except himself. If there was any vice in him I'd tell you, but I tell you, on the contrary, that there's none—and you don't need to be told so. We must do what we can for him—give him his head—and stand by with the towel and sponge—and a basket for the pieces. Now don't you lose heart, my dear. Show me the stuff you're made of.

And let me tell you this—when you and I and he are dead and buried—and your grandchildren are walking the woods—Gervase's will be a name to conjure with. You believe in Heaven, and I hope that I do. Well, then you'll know all about it. . . . Keep your head up—give him of your smiles and tears. He may be a thundering fool—but damme he's an honest one.

He folded and sealed his letter.

CHAPTER XX

"THE WANDERER"

"OH, my dearest Rose," writes Miss Clara Smithers from Russell Square (in an Italian hand) to a friend in the suburbs, "have you see *The Wanderer*? But of course you have not. It is the very latest thing, and more beautiful than you could believe. I cried my eyes out over it last night, and Mamma took it out of my hands as I went upstairs to bed. It would have been under my pillow and I am sure I should have dreamed of the Author all night. Poor Lord Bendish (for that is his name!), how dreadfully he must have suffered. You feel that he must have written *with his heart's blood*. Who *she* was who caused him this anguish (so truly and beautifully described) I cannot divine. Everybody is asking, and the newspapers are full of initials with dashes and stars after them. But they don't really know. I counted the asterisks in *three*, and all were different. Lady O—— is mentioned, and Lady Hetty Masters; but I think myself that he met her abroad. . . . And yet I feel sure that she is English! Do beg or borrow it. You will be in agony; but such pain, for another, is very good for the soul, I think. Sympathy is surely an angelic quality. It is the height of fashion; no one talks of anything else. The description of the Colosseum, seen by the poet, through *streaming tears*, which he takes for rain (the weeping of the skies), is the most touching thing I have ever read. It can hardly be bought now, though it has only been out a week. Mr. Farrow (you know how fashionable he is) paid three guineas for his copy—wasn't it impulsive of him? Papa paid fifteen shillings for ours, which is the proper price. Now I must tell you that I have *seen* Lord Bendish! I am the proudest girl in the Square—

nobody else has seen him in our circle. I was with Mamma in Oxford Street. We went to that nice woolwork shop near the Pantheon, where you get those lovely shades of orange and tawny—don't you remember I had some once before, and did that antimacassar which Mrs. Welbore liked so much? Well, we were at the door of the shop, matching our colours, when the young man said, 'Pardon, ladies, but there goes the most famous poet in England.' I knew at once who he meant, and said, 'Where? Where?' And then he pointed him out, driving himself in a phaeton and pair. My dear, he has a divine face—like the Apollo Belvidere's—but deathly pale. He wore an enormous white coat. He looks very haughty—but Oh, so sad, and so stern! . . . When I got home I rushed to the poem and read the bit about the Colosseum again. I could *see* Lord Bendish sitting there, looking at it through his tears. It is wonderful how much such an experience helps one to *understand* poetry—more perhaps than actual acquaintance would. I am sure that if I knew Lord Bendish I should lose my heart to him. All ladies do, I believe,—but he is inconsolable, they say, and *simply will not talk about her*. Mr. Farrow told Mamma that if *she* is mentioned, he simply looks at the speaker, and then turns away his head. Isn't that dreadfully tragic? He is very proud, of course, and she has wounded him beyond recovery. He looked to me as if he must die young—and *knew it*, like Pope's Achilles. Now I come to think of it, he is very much like that splendid character. I must say I don't envy *her* her feelings at this moment. How women can be so wicked I don't attempt to think. She led him on, you know, and then rejected him. 'The prude with Circe's wile and poisoned cup,' he calls her in one part. . . . and I don't wonder. . . . I saw your Mr. Heniker the other day, looking very happy—and I wondered. . . ."

This letter, addressed to Miss Rose Pierson at Golder's Green, may well have stirred emotions in a

bosom charged with memories. It did. There was a moment when Miss Pierson felt a stab of surmise that she herself, she the abandoned and long faithful, could be regarded as the unspeakable She of her friend's abhorrence and the poet's grief. And there succeeded moments of pang when she remembered what had been, and what had promised to be her relations with this tormented poet and peer. But Miss Pierson, if I don't misread her, kept her memories mostly in orderly cupboards of the mind, where they lay, put up in lavender, for very occasional tender visitations—and besides, her reason told her conscience not to be dismayed. Really, she had not dismissed Lord Bendish; it had been quite otherwise. And now, too, she had a balm at hand for any such wounds. For neither Miss Pierson's heart, nor anybody's heart, suburban or otherwise, is able to stand quite still. You may gather from the fragmentary ending of my extract from her correspondence that she had finally accepted the good Roger's homage and service; and you will gather it truly.

Rose, therefore, was able to dismiss her reproaches, and put away repining. But curiosity remained. She must by all means see, hold, read *The Wanderer*; and by this time of day she had the means of being instantly gratified. She had learned much since we saw her last, tearless in her stricken grief and constancy. She had learned to see herself in Mr. Roger Heniker's eyes, and to be pleased with the reflection. She had learned the uses of the pout,

of the head askances, of the "hunching shoulder"; she had become sleek under the adoring gaze of her young flame-headed lover. She knew very well what she could do with him; she enjoyed her assured position in the household, her enhancing as a Well-beloved in the eyes of those to whom she was merely a niece or an employer. These are lessons easily learned.

She got her book, no doubt, and absorbed and put it away, with perhaps a sigh. Here had been indeed a lover—on paper.

The first edition of *The Wanderer*, a Poem, by George, Lord Bendish, lies, as they say, before me. It is a quarto volume bound in green morocco, with gilt edges, and a border of gold olive-leaves about its side. In the midst thereof is the Bendish coat and motto, surmounted by a baron's coronet. It has wide margins and thin-faced type, printed in pale ink. Much of the delicate elegance of the 18th century, fading but not yet vanished in the early 19th, is upon the book, which makes it hard to believe that it ran so passionate a career. *Tantaene animis!* we say. Yet there is no doubt at all about that.

It came upon a London still accustomed to look to poetry for the nearest expression of the human heart. One has given up the habit nowadays, because the heart of man expresses itself more readily in action. Rhetoric is no longer relief to a man in love, and where a man, wrung by emotion, would

have cried himself to quietness in verse in Bendish's day, in our own he would probably trumpet on his nose or run to open the window. If intolerably moved he might go to Brighton, or even to Central Africa—he would not, I think, write a long narrative poem in *terza rima* all about himself; he would not, if he were of Bendish's degree, even write a novel. But in the eighteen-twenties, and eighteen-thirties, Society had a sharp eye for the publishers' windows; and in the year which saw the Reform Bill become the law it was rewarded by two successive displays.

The Wanderer came out first, and made its author a famous man. He was already notorious, for the Manifesto to the People of England had seen to that. The great world and the small alike had read the Manifesto and cheered or pished as might be. He had, as a fact, irritated nearly everybody by it; but everybody knew who Lord Bendish was, and had, as it were, a skeleton of him in the mind's eye, ready to be filled in upon occasion. *The Wanderer* gave occasion, and immediately George Lord Bendish stood before the town as a young man of tempestuous passions, of sorrows, of grandiose ambitions, of much miscellaneous and elegant learning, and of an eloquence such as had not been heard in English poetry since the times of great Elizabeth. So, at least, it was declared.

The Wanderer is very eloquent. His music wells out of him, now gushing forth with gurgitations and breaking spray, now streaming steadily, now a dropping fall of sound; but never ceasing to flow.

It handles the primal emotions in the grand manner; it is very dignified but persistently despondent; it deals with women more in sorrow than in anger; it frequently appeals to Heaven. It borrows largely from Nature in her more terrific moods and manifestations. Chasms and torrents, rainbows and rolling clouds, mountain peaks and venerable towers on the borders of lakes: these and other splendid witnesses assist at the obsequies of the poet's massacred affections. Italian skies, Claude-Lorraine landscapes, with a happy and brightly-dressed peasantry in the foreground, Michael Angelo, the ruins of Rome, Vesuvius and the Island of Capri—these phenomena also, dipped in the heart's blood, made prismatic with the tears, reverberating with the sighs of a most unhappy young man of family and rank, are more occasional accessories of the romantic funeral of his passion. Never, you would have said, did a poet mourn in more splendid company, and never the heartless dealer of the mortal blow produce a greater cataclysm in nature.

She is never directly referred to. We hear that her dwelling was "in a sea-girt paradise," and that the mountains, like couchant lions, kept her secrets inviolable. We hear of her "slim and pardlike strength," of her eyes "like the blue ice whose flame is death." Her love is fatal, her touch paralyses, her kiss makes to rave. "In stature dainty-small like that lithe minion, Who wrought the ten years' havoc in old Troy"—helps to fix her for those who knew that she had been Poore's model for his Helen

in *The Vision of Argos*; but it was not general knowledge in London when the poem was in everybody's mouth, and need never have been, but for what followed later and hastened the catastrophe of this narrative. Rose Pierson, who had a painful interest in *The Wanderer*, would have been little the wiser if she had been told the name of this malign enchantress. Roger Heniker, who had guessed it, kept his own counsel. Whether Tom Moore had an inkling is not to be known. He met the Duke of Devizes at a great house not long after publication, we hear, and had a short conversation with His Grace. The poem was certainly mentioned between them, and Bendish himself was, in fact, pointed out to the great man.

"Ho," the Duke had said, "that's the young man, is it?" and gave him a keen and frosty look. "H'm," was his verdict. "I thought he was a coxcomb. But he isn't."

"He has genius, Duke," said Tom, "and that's rare." The Duke took snuff.

"It may be—I don't know so much about that as you do, Moore. But I do know a puppy when I see one." He declined an introduction. It was then that Tom mentioned his visit to Rapallo in the spring, where he had seen "our friends the Poores."

"So I hear," the Duke said—but no more. He had little doubt in his own mind but that Master Bendish had been making love to Georgey and had been snubbed. Hence these melodious wails. There

would be wails, he judged, less melodious if Poore happened upon *The Wanderer*.

As for the noble author, his overweening success by no means corresponded with his inordinate ambition. He could, indeed, only be his own tributary, and the utmost service he could do himself was to spurn what the world offered him. Now to do this adequately and continuously it was very necessary that the world should go on offering; and so it did. He used to hold levees wherever he went. Some thought it rather ridiculous, and he said that he thought it so; but he took it very seriously, and liked it out of measure. People were brought up to be presented to him, women as well as men. He allowed that to be done. He had extremely little to say to them, but made great play with scornful eyelids, quivering nostrils, and the upper lip which had reminded Miss Smithers of the Apollo Belvidere. Yet he knew, as well as any royal personage, to a hair's shade, the amount of deference that was paid him, or that was due, and not Brummell himself in his heyday could have been more exigent. At a dinner-party he was mostly silent; with men about him, unless they were his intimates (and that means his inferiors), invariably so. He had got, in fact, into that sulky way of accepting homage—as if it was long overdue—which those who never can get enough of it use as a kind of solatium to themselves. He took it peevishly, but always looked about for more.

Yet he had his troubles, as we all have—even in

this hour of apogee. The politicians pestered him. Mr. Hunt was a difficult man to shake off. If anybody could have quenched him it would surely have been Bendish, who had the art of the cut direct at his finger-ends. But Hunt's hand on the back was not to be avoided but by flight, and it was comic to see the young lord's terror of it. He fairly fled the hearty orator. Then there was that infernal Manifesto to the People of England. The newspapers made play with that, and the supply of it seemed inexhaustible. He had agents pretty well all over England buying it up. There's no saying what that cost him: Heniker knew, who had to find the money. But the atrocious thing had ways of its own. You might be about Leicester Square and Fleet Street for a week and see not one; and then one fine day the whole town would seem fluttering with it, like Hampstead on a washing day. Bendish was furious—it wasn't safe to mention Poore, or the Reform Bill, or even Argos in these days.

Then again there was *The Vision of Revolt* which was printing. He took a short way with that. He sent back the sheets as they came, without looking at them; but Leigh Hunt, as we know, was in charge of that masterpiece, and passed every one of them himself, unbeknown to his noble friend.

He cancelled the Preface, and wrote another, which he signed, but unwillingly. The new Preface cost him a good deal of reflection, for all its brevity. "Mr. Poore," it finally read, "is a learned and intrepid explorer of English History, and has

reached certain conclusions which I admire. It is not for me to speak of their justice or reason; the greatest service I can do them is to let them speak for themselves. Mr. Poore, however, has tempted me to believe that a few words from me may serve him for introduction into polite and instructed circles, though I confess that I never read the work of a man who needed less of his friends. My interest in these strenuous pages is, I must be allowed to say, literary rather than speculative. Mr. Poore thinks hardly of the institutions of his country, and justifies himself with such vigour that I am hopeful at least of its literature so long as he is at hand to uphold it. He is both bard and seer, poet as well as politician. Let him take heart therefore. *Telis, Phæbe, tuis lacrymas ulciscere nostras!*—BENDISH.”

It was pretty dexterous, really. The invocation of Apollo at the end was as good a thing as Bendish ever did. But certainly it was offensive, and I'm not at all sure that it was not meant to be. Tom Moore, the only person with whom it was discussed, ventured a mild remonstrance. “I would expand it, my dear Bendish; upon my honour I would. You don't wish to hurt the feelings of a friend. Now, you use the word *admire* in the right way—but surely you see that its very rightness, its scrupulosity, has a sting? Gervase has a quick temper—he'll be hurt. I beseech you not to *admire* his conclusions.”

Bendish was very much pleased. That was the sort of tribute he loved. “But that's just what I

do, Tom. I admire, but I don't applaud. I don't applaud, and I won't."

"But you did, my dear friend, you know you did——"

"Pooh," said Bendish, "I applauded him, not his silly doctrine."

"Fie," cried Tom, "fie, my dear soul. You are belittling your own generosity. I foresee a very peck of trouble out of this. Better indeed have no preface at all."

"There shall be this preface," said Bendish, with a heavy brow, "or none at all; and you'll find that they will prefer this one."

"There's your name, egad," Moore admitted ruefully. "It means money. Not that Gervase wants the stuff——"

"He wants readers, though, like every poet under Heaven," said Bendish, "and they'll read him after this. I flatter myself it's a provocative preface."

"By the Lord, you're right there," said the little man.

CHAPTER XXI

"THE WANDERER" EXAMINED

THE Duke read Bendish's book, and had no difficulty. This was his beloved Georgey described by a candidate for the dog-whip. His desire was to administer it himself, but he knew that could not be, since every lash on the rascal's shoulders would flick those of the slandered lady. Bendish, he judged, had made himself safe, and he had to hope so. Should Poore catch sight of *The Wanderer* and get an inkling of the truth—what then? But Poore was not suspicious by nature, and Georgey might be trusted to keep her rueful counsel.

Meantime the town talked, and women's names were bandied about like shuttlecocks in a country-house on a winter's day. Certainly it had not been Lady O——, it was maintained, for Bendish had been seen since in her box at the Opera. The great world had seen him there, the lesser read it under the newspaper asterisks, which fell about like showers of meteors on the day following publication. Could it then have been Mrs. Maynard? What was to be said of Mrs. Joicey? Her candidature was warmly supported by her friends. The Duke, who heard everything, caught no whisper of Georgiana's name. All might yet be well, he thought, if Tom

Moore (whose knowledge he suspected) could be taught discretion. But to teach Tom had been to confess his own acquaintance with the truth. No, no, never that. The thing must be risked.

Not a word, so far, from Florence. For the first time in these years of dearth he was glad to be without her words.

Six weeks or so after this hue and cry *The Vision of Revolt* appeared, without puff preliminary or subsequent explosion. It fell flat. Bendish's Preface did its work well. Here was a poem, it said, which had great technical merit. Leave out its politics and it will amuse, even move you. But the public is not moved by poetry unless it has been first moved by the poet, and it had never been moved by Poore. There is a technique also in the conduct of life, a way of moving about, of holding yourself by which only you can impose yourself upon the world. If you write poetry in your shirt-sleeves your poetry as well as you will want for a coat. Now Poore, when he had been in London, had chosen for the shade. Holland House knew him not, nor Fops' Alley. He had had no clubs. Mr. Rogers, instigated by Moore, once asked him to breakfast, but he would not go. He was employed by an attorney in those days, and so he remained until chance threw him into the rays of Mrs. Lancelot's starry eyes. From that hour his poetical life began—a great matter for himself, but nothing at all to the world. When that life of his became a great and vital matter

to Mrs. Lancelot, the world still ignored him. Then he ran away with her; then came the divorce; but even then—such was his lack of imposing manner—his own obscurity was great enough to enwrap her too. She never lifted him into notoriety—rather she was drawn down by him into the shade. Poems appeared from time to time; publishers were found; he may have had a hundred readers—we know that Tom Moore was faithful. It was through Tom that Bendish had been struck by him. But, as has been seen, he had not been able to impose upon the sensitive Bendish for long. Bendish had wearied of him, and now with a flack of the fingers spun him back into his dark.

The Vision of Revolt was for a long time ineffective. Leigh Hunt rang its praises in *The Reformer*; Tom was intoxicated by its power and incisive handling and bubbled over with it in private life. Socially, he found it of no use to him. It was contemptuously rebuked in *The Morning Chronicle* as the slaver from the mouth of an anarchist, not noticed at all by the *Times* and *Morning Post*. To be sure, there were the magazines and the quarterlies to come. These might be trusted to take toll, but they were not then, any more than they are now, supported by the mob; and as for the fashionable, we know that they read what they please, and find in it what they expect. All might have been well but for trivial accidents. If Tom hadn't been indiscreet and Mr. Hunt, the orator, officious, the fashionable world had heard no more of Georgiana, nor the political

troubled itself with her husband; but these things *will* occur. As for Orator Hunt, he had his reasons too, but they need not concern us at the moment. But Tom's intervention is another thing. It was part chivalry and part terror. There was none of the vulgar "I happen to know the truth" about it. For he did not *know*; he only suspected. Bendish had told him nothing, nor had he dared to ask anything. But, putting two and two together, he felt, rather than was convinced, that he was right. He was not, however, angry with his noble friend, because, being a poet himself, he knew what these things came to; he knew (none better) the uses of a pretty peg for one's draperies of sentiment. At the same time he was passionate to defend the fair lady, and terrified lest her volcanic husband should come home to do it himself. If that should happen, he knew it would be necessary to take a line. Old friends were best, and Bendish would have to be given the go-by. But please the Powers that would *not* happen, and lest it should he went tip-toe about London in these days, ready to guffaw any breath of Georgiana's name out of house.

He then, lighting, like the butterfly he was, upon a group at a great house, found it discussing *The Wanderer*, and hovered to listen. One said that he happened to know that Bendish had been awkwardly placed before his journey abroad. A lady's name, never yet involved, was mentioned, and this lady, it seemed, had been in Paris when Bendish left England. Now what was to be said to that?

This was received with the seriousness it demanded. The lady was warrantable; she would have done credit to any intrigue. She was married; she had birth. She had not much beauty, it was true—but what was that? Instances were cited, from Queen Margot to Madame de Staël. It was contended that “The Wanderer” never spoke of his Circe’s beauty. Then Tom intervened, with unfortunate chivalry.

“But he does—and he has reason. She’s the most lovely woman in England, and——”

“What!” they cried him. “She’s in England, then?” He was checked and confused.

“She is not, then. But she was. And while I’m upon it, ladies, I am constrained to say that my friend Lord Bendish has been carried away. I can understand a romantic attachment as well as any man born; I can understand a bitterness of resentment—but here the two are not in reason. He can never have been rejected because he can never have offered—the thing’s impossible. So much I must say on behalf of the lady.”

“Your exquisite reason, Tom?”

“Ah!” cried he, flushed with his transport, “but a wife and a mother! But a martyr herself to the great passion! Oh, the thing is incredible! I have never spoken to Bendish a word of this—believe me. I could not. Nor can anybody else that I can see, lest untold mischief be the end. There are persons—there are even *personages*—who, if they had an inkling—No more of it. I may have said too much——”

"Tom," said one, "you are warm."

"You are right," he said, "I am warm—and yet sometimes my blood runs cold. The world would be the poorer by a fine poem, but I could wish *The Wanderer* had not been born." He turned to the young man who had brought him into this and admonished him with a wagging finger. "Havilot, let me beg of you to stop this discussion. It's a serious matter. I will add but this one observation. If you knew as much as I do, you would—" But here came the most eloquent aposiopesis, surely, since Neptune's *Quos ego*—; for the little man grew as red as a turkeycock, stared with round eyes at one door, and fled out of another. In that door of entry stood, erect and beribboned, white-headed and be-whiskered, the Duke of Devizes, side by side with a lady, giver of the feast. The cat was out of the bag. Before the rooms began to empty everybody in it knew who Bendish's Circe had been. That much the world was told, but Moore's indignant denial of the fact was not recorded.

When that came to the Duke's ear, as come it did, his blue eyes glittered like frosty stars, and he wrote a note to Bendish.

"The Duke of Devizes' compliments to Lord Bendish. He would be glad of a few moments' conversation with his lordship if he can be allowed, and at any time convenient."

To that note Bendish, suspecting nothing, sent a proper reply, and in due course was shown in to the Duke.

The Duke bowed, but did not offer his hand.

"I am much obliged to you for coming," he said. "There is a private and personal matter connected with your recent publication which concerns me nearly."

"I am curious," Bendish said, "to know what that can possibly be. Your Grace and I move in different worlds."

"It's the same world, I fancy," the Duke said, "and it's a small world. But this is the matter. Gossip has lately been making free with the name of a great and dear friend of mine, a lady. Her name is Mrs. Poore, and she and her husband and family live at Rapallo in Italy. Gossip, malice, slander, what you will, make her conduct the turning-point of your Poem."

Bendish drew himself up. "I must deny your Grace's right to cross-examine me," he said, "but I will say this, that if the lady's conduct were indeed the turning-point of my poem, it would not have been published as such."

The eyes of the two men met. Bendish's were steady. If he was lying, he was lying well. The Duke saw that he would lie the thing out to the end. He bowed his head slightly.

"I should have expected such an answer. The lady in your Poem is—imaginary? That is what you would have me understand?"

"She is imaginary," said Bendish.

The Duke held out a couple of fingers. "I am very much obliged to your lordship. The ascription

to my friend was made explicitly, and to me. In the absence of the proper person, and as trustee of an instrument of which Mrs. Poore is beneficiary, I took upon myself to apply immediately to the fountain-head. The slander once set afloat will be difficult to overtake, and I can only hope that my friend Poore, who is of a headstrong nature, won't hear of it. I can, I am sure, rely upon your lordship to correct what is a most unfortunate and, I am glad to believe, unwarrantable handling of a lady's name."

It was Bendish's turn to bow. "Your Grace may rest satisfied that I shall do what becomes me," he said. After a few stiff phrases of a general nature he withdrew.

Now let it be said in justice to him that, although he lied, he did not think that he had. It is quite true that his trivial affair with Georgiana had set him off poetising, but fairly certain that there was no deliberate portrait of her in *The Wanderer*. The heartless enchantress were indeed ludicrous as a portrait, and the weakness of the poem really is that the occasion of all its portentous musings is so conventional. The beguilements of Circe, the disenchantment of the youth were the merest peg for rhetoric. Italy, an atmosphere of temperament, was the real study: Italy was the real heroine, as surely as Bendish was the hero.

But he was uncomfortable. He was disturbed. A bitter something surged up in his heart. He had been had up like a schoolboy to the headmaster's study. He had almost seen the birch in the corner,

behind the great atlas. He hated the Duke more than any man living, and vowed to revenge himself if he could. Physically, he was not at all a coward; but he was impressionable, like all poets, and it was some time before he shook off the foreboding of trouble which this visit had given him. He had found himself face to face with inflexible honesty, which, though he vowed that he was not a liar, made him feel like one. He had a streak of caution in him too which advised him to cast about in all directions for safety, for a port of refuge should the storm break suddenly upon him. He was comforted by the thought that he had withdrawn the preface to Poore's poem in time. There, at least, was a patch of blue sky. He could not, then, be suddenly confronted by political opinions which he had ceased to hold. But for the other matter—for a storm blown up by his own "Wanderer"—he had times of feeling that he must travel far if that gale were to be rode out. He must wander indeed, and see the world through black and weeping glasses. It was at such times that the image of Rose Pierson rose before him—her willowy grace, the quick weaving of her hands, her adoring and trustful eyes. O looks of devotion! O pure, sorrowful mouth! His own eyes filled with tears as he thought of her. His gentle, faithful Rose! Thank God, there was a haven in her ever open arms. He hoarded her deeply and snugly within himself, and when the world vexed him used to steal away and look at his treasure in secret. He got extraordinary comfort

from her in this way; but it never occurred to him to pay her a visit. Enough to know that she was there, waiting for him. Thank God for good women! His eyes would fill with tears as he breathed this prayer.

But you can't fill the public eye, and mouth, without some annoyance to yourself. Hard upon the troubles due to *The Wanderer*, came those of *The Vision*. The unspeakable Hunt—the orator and not the poet—blazed into speech about *The Vision of Revolt*, and in defence of his "noble friend." There were outrageous things in that work, he said, which made his English blood boil. These were those notes already quoted, about Parliament and George IV. The House of Commons was insulted, cried Mr. Hunt, the person of the Monarch assailed. Could it be said that Lord Bendish had set his name to such a scurrilous libel! Never. His lordship had, it seems, written a preface to the book. His lordship, let him tell them, had written *two*. One he had withdrawn when he had the work before him, and had substituted another. Let them read before they judged him. *That* was a preface which any lover of literature might write to a book whose art he admired while he deplored its content. That, in truth, was such a preface as the author of *The Wanderer* might furnish to a brother poet. It was a task of honour. His lordship had done his duty scrupulously. "The great service I can do him," said he, "is to let him speak for himself." There spoke the man of honour, faithful to his promises but resolute

not to endorse by any one scratch of the pen the reckless and impious reflections upon his country, his King, and the Constitution, which Mr. Poore has not hesitated, etc., etc. This speech made up in warmth for what it lacked of matter, and received a good deal of comment. Questions were asked in the House of Commons. The offensive Note was read. There was talk of Breach of Privilege. The reference to King George IV. came up for discussion also. That was referred to the Attorney-General for a report.

Finally the Duke sent for *The Vision of Revolt* and read it, preface and all. Having done that, he thought for a little, and then he got up and wrote a short note. It was addressed to the publisher of the book, and contained a confidential request.

CHAPTER XXII

A BUDGET

1. *Thomas Moore to Gervase Poore.*

SLOPERTON, 10th March.

MY DEAREST GERVASE,—You are a terror to the law-abiding, a sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day. O sir, how did you dare lay hands upon an anointed, withal a dead, king? It will go hard with you if the politicians read you. But there's worse to come. When I read your note about the House of Commons the hairs turned to bristles on my back. Good for you to be in Italy with your fair lady and babes about you! Here at least you have given a foothold for all parties to stand and shoot at you. For you have pleased devil a one, my boy—neither the Tories, since you hint at worse than Reform; nor the Whigs, since you laugh at Reform; nor the Radicals, since you call them sucklings. Why, what the devil would you have? And to have made a Tory of our friend Bendish! You see he will have none of you. He *admires*, quotha! and fobs you off with a tag from the classics! There will be a plank loose in your barque, Gervase, if *he* turns rat so soon. And if I shift the metaphor and say there's a screw loose in your pate, you'll forgive the freedom of a friend, who loves the poet, and execrates the

sansculotte, and trembles for the skin of the boldest son of Priam that ever wooed Leda's daughter.

My dear, your Poem is a fine thing; it is even damned fine. It is so fine indeed that you can afford Bendish's flouting preface. Your *Argos* thrilled me; but your Vision of England, gone, going, and to come has ravished me of my wits. I see, I feel, I believe, as I read you. If not thus, then not at all. And your tenderness to all objects of pity! Your great dim (for you have the sense of tears, Gervase, and be d—d to you), rolling, tragic pageant sweeps by as beautiful or terrible a pastoral landscape as ever I saw out of the best of us—the very best. 'Tis as if Piers the Ploughman informed Colin Clout. True, you lack the Chaucerian gusto—you have no breath left for a frolic laugh. When you laugh there's a bitter ring. O man, your fellow in the sun "without a face"—ah, how could you have the nerve! And bedad, he's there; he *was* there, and we have him yet. But of all your foregrounds commend me to Hodge at the blessed Mass, dumb before his wooden Gods, while beyond him the monasteries are tumbling, and the saints' bones littering the cloister floors. For these readings of the soul your own will live—and a fico for your politics.

Bendish has the *pas* of you, howsoever. His *Wanderer* came out a month before you, and holds the stage. Never was such a scramble after a poem before. Indeed, the young lord hath a perennial fount of poesy within him. He has been lionised to his heart's content. All the pretty women aim to

set him wandering again, each in her company. The fate of Hylas is like to be his—but that he has the way of the Grand Turk with him. He sits on a divan, and the candidates are brought up by the chief eunuch. You would admire his cool and critical eye. I misdoubt your opinion of *The Wanderer*. 'Twill be too fervent for you, too torrential, too much informed with himself. You have your eye upon the object, he upon the subject of all verse. If he suffers, look you, Mont Blanc has the bellyache. He reminds me of the Jew in the fable, who after a supper of liver and bacon was overtaken by a thunderstorm on his way to bed. He quailed at each crashing peal, his eyes showed white, he sweated in fear. "God of Israel!" he cried in his anguish, "what a fuss about a little bit of pork!" There you have Bendish confronted by the marvels of Nature. But 'tis a rolling stream of song, for all that.

My salutations to your lady—to you all my love.
—Your friend, T. M.

2. *Gervase Poore to Lord Bendish.*

SETTIGNANO, 21st March.

MY DEAR BENDISH—Your Preface to my Poem is perfunctory. You had served me better by none at all. I do not say, however, that I am surprised by your sudden coolness towards ideas by which, I remember, you were somewhat suddenly fired. I have to thank you, at any rate, for making feasible

by your momentary enthusiasm a Poem with whose scope and definite predictions I have no reason to be dissatisfied; and I may even go so far as to congratulate myself upon receiving your approbation of its literary merits. Whether you might have accorded it more generously is a matter for you to reflect upon. You have, however, expressed yourself clearly upon the only side of the book upon which, I see, you are capable of a respectable opinion.

I have not yet seen your own Poem. I have asked my publishers for it, and don't doubt of my admiration of it. It will not, I assure you, be swayed in any degree by yours of mine.—I am, yours sincerely,

GERVASE POORE.

The Right Honourable
Lord Bendish.

3. *The Reverend Sydney Smith to Samuel Rogers.*

COMBE FLOREY, 14th March.

MY DEAR ROGERS—What think you of the *Vision of Revolt*? Does it urge your bile? Mine has got into my head, I can't see. I am like Homer's lion after a meal, or Dante's cannibal Pisan. My jaws yet drip from the savoury entrails. But now I'm hungry for the poet's blood. We are to lay him out soon. I hear that Christopher North will open the ball in *Maga*; he is even now whetting his glaive. Jeffrey, another Graffiacane, will be into him with a prong. My own weapon is the sabre. You may

guess whether Murray gives me a free hand. I'll show you some of my wrist-work anon. You saw Leigh Hunt's hysterics? The other Hunt—the white-hatted unspeakable—has taken the field in defence of his noble friend Bendish. Terrible ally! But—"ξυνὸς Ἐνυάλιος καὶ τε κτανέοντα κατέκτα"!—'Tis the fortune of war, and the young man can't have it all his own way. I say, "A plague on both their houses"—Bendish with his of ill-fame and Poore with his Commons House. He has made me a man-eater with his confounded savagery. You have read his Note? 'Tis undoubtedly scandalous. I suppose the Government will prosecute. Or will the House of Commons bring him to his knees? Or Majesty's self, like the daughter of Herodias, dance for his head on a charger? He wields an impartial whip, odd rot him. There's not a shin in England unoffended, I doubt. I hear that Tom Moore, the little Whiteboy, is shouting with joy—trailing his coat and whirling his shillelagh. "Ere the King's crown go down there are crowns to be broke." *Auto da fé*, say I. "He will light this day a candle in England," will he? He shall. We'll light *him*.

What says My Lady to all this pother? Does she ask Poore to breakfast? Or is she of my mind who wish for him *for* breakfast?

The season is wondrous mild. Daffodils begin to peer already. But *The Vision of Revolt* engenders a dangerous heat. You might say we were already in the Dog Days. I wish I hadn't read it; I wish it hadn't been written. I wish the fair Georgiana

had remained with her Duke. And I wish that I could have written the thing myself.—Sincerely yours, my dear Rogers,

SYDNEY SMITH.

4. *Georgiana Poore to the Duke of Devizes.*

SETTIGNANO, 12th March.

MY DEAR DUKE—I long to know what you think of Gervase's Poem, and I am sure that he does too, though he is nervous. You know how much he respects your opinion. Lord Bendish has behaved very badly about it. When he was with us at Rapallo he egged Gervase on—indeed, he is responsible for the writing of it, though it is quite true that Gervase had been reading and thinking English history for a long time. Then, when he was at work, something happened which I can't write about, even to you, and Lord Bendish went away. He returned when the poem was just upon finished, and Gervase read it to him. Nobody could have been more enthusiastic than he seemed to be. He undertook the publishing, and to write a preface—which I admit he has done. But what a preface! It had been far better if he had done nothing at all. Gervase is very much offended and has written him a good letter. We haven't seen Lord B.'s *Wanderer*. He did not send it to us, but I think it must be on its way, from our booksellers. We had no idea that he had written it, as he said nothing of it when he returned. He must have done it between his visits

to us, and it's most odd that we heard nothing of it, as he is generally so full of himself and his own feelings.

You are in the thick of this endless Reform, I feel sure. How much my thoughts are with you! I remember so well that night when you were mobbed in the street. I was told of it at a party—and Gervase took me back to Wake House. It makes me very nervous, especially just now. I am thankful that I have Gervase here, out of harm's way. You know of course that he hopes you will throw it out of the Lords again! Extremes meet! I don't know what I wish myself, except that Gervase would get as tired of politics as I am. I am glad to say that he has been much less interested in them since his *Vision* is off his hands. He is back in his Greek myths now, and reads his Aeschylus all day. He makes me read with him for an hour every morning. I am really beginning to know a verb when I see it now. He is so sweet about it—not naturally a patient man, but always so with me. But you know what I think about him! I assure you that you need not urge me to "stick to him." I am a perfect limpet.

When your tiresome politics are over, you must have a long holiday, and I shall be very much offended if you don't pay us a visit. Your godson is going to be tall, like his father. Gervase says he is like me—and I own he has a round face. Except for that I see nothing but his father in him. He is very masterful, the little monkey.

The weather is perfect—a heavenly mild Spring. The orchard below us is full of purple and red anemones. Yesterday I found the first tulip—a dear little pointed bud, striped in red and white. They call it *Bandiera di Toscana*.

We know quite a number of people here and in Florence. The other evening at a party at the Torrigianis, I met the O——s! I had not, of course, seen *her* since the old days, and felt very shy. But she came up directly she saw me and began to talk. I never liked her, and don't find her improved in appearance. She is *very* large and flushed and blonde. She talked a great deal about Lord Bendish and *The Wanderer*, and wanted to know when and where he composed it. I couldn't tell her. She was rather *odd* about it, I thought. She came back, back, and back to it. I hear that the Willoughbys are expected—and the Hollands even. Gervase has heard from *her*—already! A very pleasant Mr. Crabb Robinson paid us a visit, and stayed to supper. There was no meat for him, but he pretended that he preferred cheese. He and Gervase talked about German poetry all night. He has not mastered the art of eating *spaghetti* yet, and was wonderfully involved in it.

I hear the children, and must fly. I daren't ask you to write—but if you could—!—Always your affectionate friend,

GEORGINA.

5. *The Duke of Devizes to Georgiana Poore.**Private.*

WAKE HOUSE, 23rd March.

MY DEAR GEORGEY—I am so driven that I have scarcely a moment for you. If you can keep *The Wanderer* out of Gervase's hands I recommend you to do so. The writer of it is a puppy, though a clever one. I had a short conversation with him the other day. I am afraid the truth is not in him. As for the Preface to your blessed Revolutionary Poem, I have Master B. on the hip, as he'll find out one of these days if he don't look out. You mustn't ask me what I think of the *Vision*. I'll do my best for G. for your sake. I hear of the beginnings of commotion, and am not surprised. You may think what you like of the Commons, but you're a fool if you write it down. Let him keep out of England, whatever he does. B. is not worth his powder. He may leave me to dock his tail. I am serious about this. Keep Gervase with you, and keep *The Wanderer* out of his way.

Don't expect me to talk politics. I am sick to death of them. Lord G. and his friends are frightening King Billy out of his wits. Creevey tells me that he's going to be one of the new peers—the slop-shop lords who are to be brought out in batches to pass the Bill. I can't say yet whether our cock will fight. It depends how they press him. If they aren't careful he'll up hackles. They have a spirit in his family. They all have it. There—no more

now. God bless you and your babies. Nothing contents me so much as to know you are happy and a joy to all who can look upon you. No more now.
—Yours, D.

6. *Thomas Moore to Gervase Poore.*

DUKE STREET, 30th March.

MY DEAR BOY—I was never more serious than I am now. The murder's out, I hear, and I am to beseech you by all you hold sacred—and I know very well what that is—to stay where you are and possess your soul. There's a hue and cry after you. I know not from what quarter exactly—but I learn that there will either be a prosecution by Information or a warrant from the Speaker to attach you for Breach of Privilege. 'Tis those blessed Notes of yours. There may be both, for the Commons are insatiable. The Duke will do what he can, of course; but even he cannot quench the Commons.

Now I know that you will be itching to be in England; I know what provocation you have received. The thing is beyond belief. I have told his Lordship plainly what I think, and you may be sure of your friends, and of hers. But think of it, Gervase. Suppose you come home and have him out, there will be a scandal. Your arrest will follow to a certainty—and where are you then? Where are your dear ones? It's sheer ruination to you. No, no, let the unwholesome scoundrel alone in his squalor. However, if you must you must, and *you may count upon me.*

I was with the Duke last night. It was at Bath House. Bendish was there and bowed as he passed us. He looked very pale—but was crowded about by the women in a monstrous way. Oh, leave him in his bagnio, for God's sake. Think of her, that angel of love and purity, think of her babes. My dear boy, the truest honour you can do her is to ignore the dirty dog.—Your friend, T. MOORE.

7. *Gervase Poore to Lord Bendish.*

SETTIGNANO, 15th April.

Mr. Poore has received *The Wanderer* and read it. He pays Lord Bendish the ill-merited courtesy of telling him that he starts this day for London in order to administer public chastisement upon his Lordship as both a liar and a coward.

8. *Lord Bendish to Thomas Moore.*

ST. JAMES'S, 7th May.

DEAR TOM—I rather fancy that I may need your friendly services one day soon. Our common acquaintance, Poore the Poet, has flown, by letter, at my throat for some fancied slight—probably he has discovered that I admired his wife and chooses not to remember that I am one of many. At any rate, he announces his proximate arrival in these islands for purposes of satisfaction—which I propose to afford him. You and I have held many a field together, but not, I think, that of dreadful Ares. I

know nobody to whom I would sooner turn than yourself, whether that god or the Cyprian Queen were above the lists. I hope that I may refer the fire-eater's friend to yourself.—Yours ever,

BENDISH.

9. *Thomas Moore to Lord Bendish.*

DUKE STREET, 8th May.

MY DEAR LORD—I regret infinitely that it is out of my power to oblige your Lordship, but not more than I regret the circumstance. Mr. Poore is an old and valued friend of mine, the husband of a lady whom I revere and honour as far as may be on this side idolatry. He has, and must on every ground have the first call upon my countenance, such as it is. To say more would be intrusive, and impertinent.—I have the honour to be, my dear Lord, your Lordship's most obedient

T. MOORE.

10. *Georgiana Poore to the Duke of Devizes.*

SETTIGNANO, 15th April.

DEAREST FRIEND—I am in dreadful trouble. A terrible thing has happened. Gervase received yesterday a letter from Mr. Moore, and, by the same post, Lord Bendish's shameful and wicked poem. He read the letter first and came in to me for the poem. I saw immediately that something serious had upset him. He asked me, very quietly, had I read *The Wanderer*? I said that I had looked at it. He said, Give it to me, and took it and read some of

it, standing by me. Then he threw it down and turned to me where I was sitting. He put his hands on my shoulders and asked me to tell him all. I knew then what he meant, and told him everything. It is true that Lord Bendish forgot himself when he was with us at Rapallo. It was when Gervase was working from morning till night at *The Vision of Revolt*, and I used to see a good deal of him. He paid me a great many compliments and used to read me poems which might have been about anybody. I thought him very foolish, but it did not occur to me that he was wicked. I knew nothing about him except that he had written a satire which Gervase thought very good. And then one morning, after being silent for some time, he suddenly fell on his knees and tried to kiss my hands. I told him what I thought about him, and he left Rapallo soon afterwards, I believe. At all events we saw nothing of him until late in the autumn. I said nothing to Gervase about it because they were rather leagued in this political affair, and Gervase was very much interested in him. I should have thrown him out in his writing—I should have killed *The Vision*. I acted for the best, as I thought. Well, I told all this to Gervase, who was kindness itself to me, and tried not to show me how angry he was. But of course I knew. He wouldn't let me look at the book, or look at any more himself, but burnt it immediately on the hearth, and then came back to me and kissed me. I cried, and he comforted me and made me feel braver and more sensible.

This morning, however, directly I was awake he told me that he must go to England and meet Lord Bendish; and now he has gone, and I am torn to pieces by anxiety and remorse. I am bitterly sorry, on every ground, that I didn't tell him at once about it. I should have stopped *The Vision*, dead, I know, but even that would have been better than a duel. It was that which deterred me, that and a feeling that I could not bring myself to speak of such a thing to one I love so much as I love Gervase. You know how difficult I find it to speak about my feelings. It is a great fault of mine. But it all seemed so trivial and absurd—when one knows what love really is, or can be. I simply forgot it as soon as I could. Oh, do be good to Gervase! I know you will.

I am well looked after here, and have friends, very kind people, the Merediths, staying with me in the house. The Princess is close by, too, and exceedingly pleasant and friendly. I knew that I couldn't go with him, and didn't even ask him to let me. But you may imagine what my feelings are. I can't sit still when I think—and the only thing to do is *not* to think. I made him promise me that he would go to you directly he reached London, and I know that he will. Oh, my dear friend, save him for me if you can. I know by your last letter that he is not safe in England; but I rely upon you. Nobody could have a better or more splendid friend than you are, and will be, for my sake and Gervase's.

The only consolation I have is that he will put himself in your hands.

I enclose a scrap for him. Please give it to him the moment it comes. He will be with you before this reaches you. He will travel fast, I know.

If I am never to be happy again I must remember these four wonderful years—no, this June will make it *five*. And I have his children to care for and bring up as he wishes. Really, in myself, I am wonderfully well. I must try to keep so whatever happens.—Always your loving, G.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE AFFAIR

POORE travelled post, day and night, without stopping more than an hour anywhere. He reached London on the 2nd of May, and went straight to Wake House. Had he had eyes for anything but one thing he would have observed the signs of the times—crowds in the streets, flags flying, bands braying. But he noticed nothing. He would have been prudent, too, if he had provided himself with a passport in some other name; but had he done that he would not have been Gervase. One thought was in his head, and one only. If he had not promised his Georgiana, he would have sought out his enemy, travel-stained as he was. It did occur to him—the Duke being out when he arrived—that he had fulfilled the letter of the law, and might now go out again and come to grips. But the memory of Georgiana's wailing voice, the pressure of her arms, her tearful eyes and wet lips, came upon him in a waking dream and stabbed him to the heart. He had a moment of weakness, and flung his arms up as he paced the Duke's library, but soon regained possession of himself.

The Duke found him when he came in towards

the dusk of a fine spring day. He had not yet had Georgiana's letter, but was prepared for him.

Now the Duke was a man of method as well as of business. The Reform Bill was before the Lords for the last time; every man's eye was upon him. Messengers came and went; great men sought interviews; king's servants brought letters and received answers. He came home directly from the House to dine, and must return afterwards. But he was ready with time for Gervase Poore.

"Well, young gentleman," he said, "so you've come over to fight?"

"Yes, sir," said Gervase. "What else should I do?"

The Duke shrugged. "Why, nothing else. But it's to be a near-run thing. That damned *Vision* of yours has emptied the hive. The Commons are out for swarming. You'll be lucky if you bring your meeting off before they get you."

"Prosecution?" Gervase asked, frowning.

"I believe the warrant will be out to-morrow. You see, they know everything. It's their business. Directly that young rapsallion's book was understood they thought you'd be at him. I suppose you gave them your own name at Dover?"

"Yes, sir," said Gervase. "I can't hide myself. I'm not ashamed of anything I've done."

"I daresay you're not, confound you," said the Duke. "But this is going to be a savage business. Everybody's against you in it. You've managed to offend every son of a gun in the country. Now,

you know, I can't do very much. I might see Billy, or I might not. I can't see him now, that's certain. And if I could, you can't expect much allowance from a fellow if you call his dead brother a hog."

Gervase laughed. "That was figurative," he said. "I might have chosen any king. Besides—it was illustrative. I was explaining what an idealist would have said."

"It will be near enough for old Ellenborough, I fancy," the Duke said drily. "The tendency of your book is, I take leave to tell you, scandalous and mischievous too. You can't get all these fine things you look for by wanting 'em, and to do your best to break up things as they are to make way for your things as they might be is nonsense, and wicked nonsense. That's my opinion. But luckily for you I think better of you than I do of your writings, and you've made an angel fall in love with you. I'll do what I can. Now let me tell you something about Bendish. I guessed at what he had been about the moment I saw his piece, by something Georgey had written about him a month or two before."

Poore's eyes pierced him. "What did she write?"

"She wrote that she detested him. Now, she don't detest a fellow for nothing. I suppose you didn't know that?"

Poore grew red. "I didn't notice anything especially——"

"No, of course you didn't. You went sailing about with your head in the moonlight, looking at

the stars. And while you were making love to Clio or Thalia or one of 'em, Bendish was making love to her. Now let me remind you that that was precisely what *you* were doing once upon a time when poor Charles Lancelot was building up a career for himself—and for her, mind you—and for her.”

Poore was frowning and scowling away, but the Duke wouldn't have it.

“None of your sulks, damn your eyes,” he said. “Hold your head up, and confess like a man. That was the size of it.”

Then Gervase held his head up. “I confess it, sir. I was engrossed in what I was doing—I did forget her, God forgive me. But I trusted her—and I was right. She is an angel of Heaven.”

“I know she is,” said the Duke, approving him. But he went on with his chastening. “It was your fault that that young Turk made her uncomfortable, and went away and spilt his silly feelings into the inkpot. You think you're going to make it up to her by tearing over Europe in order to screw him by the ear; but you're not. You're going to make things comfortable for yourself; and you leave her behind in a delicate state of health, with two young children, consumed with anxiety on your account. You're a chivalrous lover, ain't you?”

Gervase now had tears in his eyes. “By Heaven, sir, I'm a scoundrel——”

“Oh, no, you're not,” said the Duke. “You're only a man—and any mother's son of us would have done exactly the same. There's no man living but

is a moral coward, and never was one who was fit to tie a woman's shoe-string. Do you think *she* would have fought a Bendish with all the rest at stake? Not she! But she'll excuse you, and make the best of you, because she's in love with you. You are a lucky young devil, let me tell you."

"You may tell me what you will, Duke," he said. "Nothing is too hard for me. But if I don't love her——"

"Of course, you do, young donkey," the Duke broke in. "That's your luck. Now go away and change your clothes. Then you shall dine with me; and to-morrow you shall give Bendish his licking. He deserves it, and I wish I could do it for you. But that wouldn't do."

"Not at all," said Gervase.

The odd pair dined, very well contented with each other. Politics were taken for granted, but the Duke allowed himself the liberty of a gibe now and again—and Poore had the wit to see that he chastened whom he loved. The Duke said that the Reform Bill would have to pass, because when once public agitation reaches a certain point of ascension it must turn the corner and run down the other side. There's no going back, he said, because of the up-surgings from below. He agreed with Poore that it would bring about a despotism of the trading-class infinitely more severe than anything the old order had dared to exercise; but, said he, it's absurd to suppose that the mob is any more fit to rule itself

than the grocers and bakers are to rule it. Anarchy, said Poore, is a matter of minding one's own business: so it is, said the Duke; but who's to mind the country's business? "You," he said, "are about to punch Bendish's head, and you say that that is your business. It is also his, let me tell you. There's nothing in the world which you can call 'your business' which is not at once some other party's, and the country's too. Now in this affair of yours and Bendish's, the country's business is to see that you don't do it—or should be. You are only to be an anarchist by favour of the Administration, Master Poore. If it weren't for the constables you'd have been in prison years ago." Then, in the coolest way in life, he said, "The thing will be settled to-night or to-morrow night."

"What thing, sir?" Gervase asked him.

"Why, Reform," said the Duke. "I've settled it. I'm going to disoblige you. The thing shall go through this time."

Gervase stared. "Reform! It is in your House!"

"It is—and has been for two days."

"Good God, Duke!"

"What then, young man?"

Gervase laughed. "Why, I come over here full of my affair, and press it upon you as if the world swung by it—and you are handling the destiny of England at this moment. Lord God, what a worm I am!"

"We are all worms, or shall be," said the Duke. "These things are matters of relation. Now I must be off."

Gervase got up and walked to the window. Torches dipped and flared; there was upon the dark that curious mottling which means a concourse.

"Duke," he said, "there's a mob. Is it safe for you?"

The Duke was putting letters into his breast-pocket. "Eh? Oh, they won't hurt me yet. It's to-morrow night, or even later, that the trouble may be." Then he went away to his carriage, which Gervase saw was guarded by Life Guards. He heard the roar of the street as the door was opened—flooding the house.

After dinner Tom Moore was introduced and saw his friend. He was ready to back up the quarrel, though he owned that Bendish had called upon him first. But Bendish had outraged his moral sense. Love is a calamity which may befall any man, and if an honest man chance to fall in love with his friend's wife he doesn't write a book about it. But Bendish, he allowed, was not as other men. To Bendish his pleasure was a law of Nature, undeviating and inevitable. Woe betide the man or woman who interferes with laws of Nature! Bendish, he told Gervase, would probably shoot him, unless he were shot first. But Gervase said that he didn't mean to shoot him. In fact, he said that the duel would be entirely Bendish's affair. His own affair was to chastise Bendish, publicly if possible. "That," cries Tom, "leaves him no alternative." "I dare say it doesn't," Gervase said. Nothing would shake him in his determination to confront Bendish pub-

licly and to confront him to-morrow, and that being so, Tom was able to help him. Bendish, he said, was a late riser. He would not breakfast till noon, or leave his rooms till five. He usually went round to the Coffee Tree at that hour, and left it, to dress, at half-past seven. At eight or half-past he would dine, and after dinner God knew where he might be. He wrote—when he did write—from two in the morning onwards, and might be in bed by six.

Gervase said that he would look out for him at five to-morrow evening, and that after that, when he had done with him, his lordship might choose to vary his habits for a day.

So it befell that at a quarter-past five the next afternoon Bendish came out into St. James's Street, which was at its fullest. He was accompanied by a friend, one Captain Count Wissendonk of one of the Embassies, a tall, gaunt, high-buttoned man of shining cheekbones. In the street stood Gervase Poore, unaccompanied; a light switch in his hand, a lady's riding-whip it looked to be.

Bendish saw him immediately, but did not falter. Poore advanced to meet him and put two fingers to the brim of his hat. Captain Count Wissendonk stiffened and saluted. Bendish stiffened but did not salute.

"Lord Bendish," Poore said, "a word with you, if you please."

Bendish looked him full. "One ought to be enough," he said.

"One sentence will serve my turn," said Gervase.

"I have to tell you that you are a coward and a liar, and that I intend to treat you as such." Whereupon he struck him sharply across the face with the switch. Bendish grew grey as he stepped back, but the streak stared white, and then flooded with red. Captain Count Wissendonk said, "Ha, by God!" The pupils of his pale eyes became specks.

"By God, you shall pay for that," Bendish said. Count Wissendonk interposed.

"On behalf of this gentleman I will meet any friend of yours you please, sir," he said.

"You may wait upon Mr. Thomas Moore, sir," said Poore, touched his hat again, and walked slowly up the hill.

A score of people saw this, though it only lasted twice as many seconds. But it was all over town in an hour.

Bendish carried it off as well as could be. He went to the Club, and played hazard. He paid two calls, and visited Mr. Murray in Albemarle Street. He dined out, and went on to two parties afterwards. The places simply blazed with rumour, but not of him: nobody spoke of anything or thought of anything but the Bill. But Bendish couldn't stand much of it. He thought they were all occupied with himself, and the second party beat him. He was acutely sensitive to fine shades of cognition, and what he had suspected at his first party became, to him, clear as noonday at the second. They eyed him, they were at their whispers, his honour was impugned. He couldn't stand that. He remained,

however, for a quarter of an hour, fighting with his tremors, in a cold sweat, speaking to nobody; and then he left. As he went home, while all the world was saying that the Duke meant to kill the Bill, he knew that he must kill Poore.

Long after midnight Captain Count Wissendonk came in to see him. It appeared that there was a warrant out against Mr. Poore, so anything that were done must be done at once, within a few hours. Would this morning at seven be possible? The place Wimbledon Common?

"Perfectly possible," said Bendish. "I leave everything to you." The Count glowed and shone, suppressing a strange gloating noise by swallowing it.

"The arm is your choice," Wissendonk said.

"I'll have pistols," said Bendish.

The other said, "I think you are right. Your man has a long reach."

"I'm a good marksman," said Bendish. And then, "There must be an end of this."

"By God," said the Count, "I should think so."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MEETING

THE sun was over the trees and sparkling upon grass and leaf when Bendish stepped out of his carriage. Early as he was, the adversary was beforehand. Another carriage stood in the shadow of the woods, and three gentlemen apart from it in conversation. Captain Count Wissendonk, with a flat oblong case under his arm, went on to meet one of the party, a short and plump gentleman, black as the deed they purposed from the stock to the toes. The Count, who was tall and bony and had a bleak grin between his whiskers, saluted him in military fashion. "Ah, good day to you, me dear Count," cried this little man in his rich voice—"a somewhat chancy light we have, but it betters every moment—and after all, let us hope that Mistress Honour won't be too thirsty between such champions. Bedad, sir, the English Parnassus is emptied this morning—'this pious morn,' as young Keats had it." To this Count Wissendonk had no reply ready, being filled with an awful solemnity, except that Lord Bendish, his friend, had left everything to him. Then he observed the third of Mr. Moore's party, and asked who that might be. He was told that it was "me friend," Doctor Porteous, who was

acquainted with both parties, and had come "for fun as much as anything else—for fun and the air of a fine spring morning."

The preliminaries were not long in doing: the ground was set off, twenty paces run north and south; the pistols were loaded; and then each second returned to his man. Moore found his somewhat agitated. Gervase was no better at waiting than most of his species. In imagination the thing was already done twenty times over, and he was suffering from the accumulated nerve-storm of so many encounters with a man who hated him. But he was glad that he could go to work and get the thing over. He took off his coat and waistcoat and took them himself to the carriage. Then he returned, bareheaded, and followed Tom. He and Bendish, who was pale and impressively statuesque, bowed to each other and took their places at the mark. The signal was to be the fall of a handkerchief, which it was agreed Dr. Porteous should give, a common friend.

Standing there in the dewy mildness, in the sun-drenched mist, Gervase thought of Georgiana in her Tuscan garden, and felt the heavenly peace which her love and tender care had taught him. He was perfectly calm now, and knew that his hand was steady. He let himself feel the weight of the toy in his hand, he let his eye appraise the form of the young man confronted with him, admired his round and curly head, his strong throat, exposed almost to the midriff, his square shoulders and pronounced, elegant waist. "A fine, high-bred young man, in-

deed—but the pity of his upstart soul!” God forbid that he should blaze into so salient and beautiful a thing and mar it with a red rent. He laughed to himself at the same moment for so rhetorical a thought—and at that moment also the white patch at the side of them flashed downwards.

As he threw his arm up to fire into the air there was a flash of light before him, and he felt a pang. Then came the crack. He was confused—by the noise and flare, as he thought—he felt stupid and discovered that his arm was limp at his side, his pistol on the ground. He thought that his head was full of blood, and was angry with himself for having let his weapon drop. One had to do these things properly—he must apologise, he supposed. They would have to begin again. He stooped to pick up the thing; and then there was a surging upwards of his blood, as it were in a huge curling wave; he felt himself falling, and knew no more.

Bendish had shot him under the shoulder, clean through the pectoral muscle. While Dr. Porteous was kneeling beside the dropt body, he himself allowed Count Wissendonk to help him on with his coat and waistcoat. Then he said, “I’m very sorry, you know. But he insulted me beyond bearing. There was no other way. If I’ve killed him, the poor fellow has only himself to thank. He must have known that I had no alternative. He was very intelligent. I’m sorry for his wife, but—” Count Wissendonk said, “Excuse me,” and left him ruminating.

Moore and the Doctor were on their knees by the body. A third had joined them, a spare gentleman in a blue coat and nankeens tightly strapped. Recognising him, the Count drew himself up and saluted.

"Not fatal, I trust, your Grace."

"Can't say yet," the Duke answered.

Dr. Porteous looked up and shook his head. "No, no. He'll be crippled for a month or two—but I'll engage that there's nothing vital been touched. We'll lift him back directly I've strapped him up."

The Duke's keen eye was ranging the sun-dappled woodlands. Pausing in his search, he spoke to the Count. "You would do well to take your friend up to town. If he needs an explanation of my presence you can give it him. I had some reason to expect interruption of the meeting, and thought that I might be useful. That's all. As for my friend here, you've heard what the surgeon says. Good morning to you."

The Count clicked his heels together, saluted ceremoniously and returned to his champion. Bendish immediately asked, Who was the new-comer; and was told. "Ah," he said, "I thought as much. Very well—since it must be so."

Count Wissendonk had no notion what he meant; but all the way home Bendish was bracing himself for another meeting. It must needs be, he knew, that he and the Duke must be confronted before the day was over. It seemed to him that this early

scene was but the prelude to a much more momentous encounter.

Gervase, when he opened his eyes, looked eagerly into the sky. "My love," he said faintly, "my love, it is the morning." Then he shut them again and went to sleep. The doctor knelt by him, holding his left wrist and watching him closely. The Duke and Moore stood side by side; you could hear the champing of the bits of the two horses. Then light steps were heard and the Duke looked sharply round. Two men in cloaks and cocked hats were coming over the wet grass, brushing through the fern.

They came up to our pair, and saluted them. "Excuse me, gentleman," said one of them. "Mr. Gervase Poore is of your party, I believe."

"He is," the Duke said. "He's had an accident, as you see." The man had recognised him.

"I am very sorry, your Grace, very sorry indeed."

"So am I," said the Duke, "but it can't be helped."

"I am very sorry on all accounts, your Grace," he said again. "The fact is that I have a warrant here for his apprehension—and I've no alternative——"

"We'll see about that," the Duke said—who had come down for the very purpose—"Whose warrant have you there?"

"The Speaker's, your Grace—the Speaker's of the House of Commons." The Duke nodded.

"Privilege?"

"Breach of Privilege, your Grace." The Duke nodded again.

“Yes, Breach of Privilege. Well, officer, you see what has occurred. Mr. Poore has no intention of running away. There’ll be no difficulty about it when he’s fit to move. Now, if you’ll serve your warrant on one of us two, we’ll wait upon Mr. Speaker in the course of the morning, or before the magistrate, as the warrant may direct. Perhaps you’ll be good enough to serve me. I am going to have Mr. Poore carried to my house at this moment—so that’s the best thing I can do for you. Now what do you say to that?”

The two officers consulted apart—that is to say, they drew apart and appeared to consult; but in reality there was no gainsaying the Duke, as they knew quite well. Returning, the warrant was handed over without another word. Salutations were exchanged, and the thing was done.

The Doctor and the Duke’s footman lifted Gervase between them and carried him to the carriage. He scarcely woke, though he opened his eyes, recognised the Duke, and lazily smiled. You saw the twinkling gleam between his half-shut lids. Tom Moore got in beside him and waved his hand to the Duke. “God bless you, Duke, for a true friend.”

“Get on with you, Moore,” the Duke said, “and eat a good breakfast. Dr. Porteous, I shall follow you. I have a horse here.” So they took Gervase back to Wake House, sleeping like a child.

In the course of the forenoon Roger Heniker, at his desk in Grays Inn, received a written message

from the Duke. "Dear Sir, be so good as to call upon me immediately. I have urgent business for your attention." In half an hour he was in the library, and received his two fingers of greeting.

"Good morning, Mr. Heniker. You find me in a kettle of fish. My young friend Poore, whom you will remember, is lying here shot through the shoulder—never mind how. These things will occur. There are worse troubles over him than that, but I've got them in hand. Now, I want you to post out to Settignano, by Florence, and fetch home his wife and children. She's in a delicate state of health at the moment; but she can travel well enough if she does it comfortably. You shall see to that, if you will, taking your instructions from me. You can take my carriage with you, and my horses as far as Dover. After that, you can post through France and Savoy—and you ought to be there in a fortnight or three weeks at the outside. I'll give you a draft on my bankers which will see you through everything. Now, can you oblige me?"

"Yes, your Grace, I can," said Roger, after a moment's swift cogitation.

"I thought so," the Duke said, highly pleased to find that he had not been mistaken in his choice. "There's only one thing more to say—and I'm afraid that's an idle thought. You can't take a woman with you? A mother, for instance, or a sister? Or have you got a wife, by chance?"

Roger grew red, but his eyes twinkled. "Well, no, sir, I have not—at the moment. But——"

"Hey?" said the Duke. "What do you mean by 'but?'"

Roger laughed. "Well, sir, I mean that—I have hopes—before long——"

"Oho, Master Heniker, so that's it." He thought—his eyes glittered. "Now look here, Heniker. Here's a little proposition. If you want a galloping honeymoon combined with a pretty liberal lift towards expenses, and (I'll add) if you're the man I take you to be, you'll be off to Doctor's Commons hot-foot, and you'll be married to-morrow morning. Mind you, I don't know your lady; but that's what I should do in your place. What do you say to that?"

Roger hesitated for one minute. Then he squared his jaw. "I'll do it, sir."

"Bravo!" said the Duke. "Then you'll start—say—at four o'clock in the afternoon? Good. I'll see to all that. Now you had better post off to your young lady."

Roger left him immediately. The Duke's eyes were aflame. For a moment or two he allowed them to burn, as he thought—"God bless her, I shall see her again under my roof!" Then he shut all down, and went out to deal with Mr. Speaker.

He heard that Gervase had had some broth. There was fever, and would be more, but Dr. Porteous had ordered Tom out of the room, and had now gone himself. He would be back in the afternoon, he said.

CHAPTER XXV

LAST THROW BUT ONE

WHEN Bendish looked back and saw three men about his fallen adversary where there had been but two, he knew immediately who the third was, and what Destiny required of him. He was, you see, more than intelligent. He was imaginative, extremely impressionable; he had foreknowledge. What he did upon the memorable evening following upon this early morning encounter was done mechanically. He left Wimbledon Common a doomed man, and he knew it.

It's impossible to say how these certainties come upon men of a certain temperament. It may be that second sight is given fitfully, unaccountably to us; it may be that any one of us is of such weight in the universe (though it sounds improbable) that the indwelling soul thereof is willing to draw back the curtain for a half-second or so, and show time-coming as time-come. What is certain is that we walk, with full consciousness, into a trap which we know to be a trap—and generally with a deadly coolness and precision. Even so a man condemned to death will walk unfalteringly down the flagged passage which leads to death in the yard, and notice

trifles as he goes—a patch of mildew on the wall, the glittering of damp-sweat there, perhaps the scuttle of a cockroach—will feel the balm of the outer air, see the floating clouds, the bars of dust, the flight of a bevy of sparrows, the twinkling leaves of a tree, even the black apparatus itself—and have no sensation of panic, suffer no instinctive shuddering of the knees, know no mad impulse of flight. Even so Bendish made his preparations to be in his place in the House of Lords that evening, to speak upon Reform, and to confront the supreme enemy of all that he stood for and was. For so his instinct regarded the Duke of Devizes—and very reasonably after a late interview.

Second sight, or imagination (which is the same thing) showed him the scene beforehand—showed him, indeed, successive scenes; all he had to do was to play the part provided. But the play was like an Italian comedy, which gives the actors the situation and leaves them to find the words. He had to build up a speech to suit the dramatic moment—and he could be trusted. He mastered himself with great determination and was able to make himself perfect. He would speak without a scrap of paper in his hand, and having said his say, he would await the answer of his enemy. He knew what a risk there was in all this. Once before he had measured himself with the Duke, who had ignored him. He might very well do it again, and Bendish thought there was no worse thing that he could do. He felt that he could not survive that—it would be a mortal

wound. No, no: he must so frame his words as to compel an answer from the man. He *must* be answered this time—it was a matter of life and death. With this condition before his mind he laboured at his oration. As for Reform, its merits or demerits, I suppose he thought as much about that as he did about England, or Peru, or mankind at large. He was past such cases; he was concerned with his own existence.

He had to fight, however, against a persistent depression of spirits, which increased upon him as the day wore on and nobody came to his door. This silence of the knocker was like an omen. It got so bad with him towards the afternoon that he penned a note to Roger Heniker and sent it by Mackintosh, with an invented matter of business to be discussed or foreshadowed. But even Roger failed him to-day. An answer was returned from Grays' Inn that Mr. Roger was out of town until further notice, but that Mr. Heniker senior would do himself the honour of waiting upon his Lordship to-morrow at ten o'clock in the forenoon. Disloyalty from a servant! His very household forsook him. He let it lie—the note—where he had let it fall. It stared at him when he came back after dark, having received his wages.

He dressed himself with care and went down to the House at six o'clock. The Chamber was very full, with ladies in the gallery, and the Commons crowded behind the bar. He found a seat with great difficulty and sat in it, looking fixedly before

him, very conscious that he was observed by many. The Duke was in his place; a noble lord was reiterating amid sympathetic murmurs from his friends all the sound old formulæ for the Bill or against it—all was one. To Bendish, sitting there with folded arms and hat a-tilt over his eyes, it was incredible that men could live and move prosperously through life uttering habitually such dull commonplaces, or cheering each other as they made the stale old points. As well make backgammon a career at this rate as politics. Did Englishmen, then, never grow up? Why, this was for all the world like a cricket match at Harrow! The moment one lordship was down, up sprang his brother, as like him as two peas, and cried up the precise contrary, and received precisely as much applause. And the Duke—who was a man—even Bendish admitted it—could sit it out. He, a man, condescended to work with these worn-out, spindle-shanked tools!

Scorn for his fellow-Christians made him stronger. He felt so very much the better man.

At about seven or half-past came his opportunity. There was a lull in the flow of oratory, while the orators yawned behind their fingers, or looked about them for something to happen. Before they were aware of him Bendish was upon his feet. They knew it first by the thrill in the gallery. There was a distinct rustling; and then white fingers ran along the railings like a breaking wave on the sand.

He was received in absolute silence. Everybody knew him, of course; everybody by this time also

knew that he had fought and wounded Poore that morning—and why.

Lord Bendish said that he should trouble their lordships with a very few observations, and should not have troubled them with any had not recent events, in which he had a small share, rendered it desirable that he should place beyond doubt the meaning of the part he intended to take in the final scene of this long drama. Whether or no this particular drama, which had lasted some fifty years or more, were to be of the nature of a prologue, and whether the stage were hereafter to be set for tragedy or comedy, or broad farce, depended, perhaps, less upon their lordships than noble lords imagined. It might be—and there were some among them who proclaimed it with no doubtful voice—that the auditory of to-day would be the actors in that resulting spectacle, that, pouring down from the gallery, streaming up from the pit, they would trample out the candles, disregard the screams of the prompter, and possessing themselves of the actors' tinsel trappings, enact therewith a grim mask of anarchy, for which those baubles and bubbles of authority, in his humble opinion, were very ill-adapted. It might be, on the other hand, that the spectators, pit, gallery and boxes, would be so spell-bound by the eloquence poured out upon them by the present occupants of the stage that they would endure with delight another fifty years of it—and if that indeed were so, he (Lord Bendish) could do no more than say with Molière's protagonist, *Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin!*

He begged leave to point out, however, to their lordships upon this auspicious night when, for a time at least, the flood-water of rhetoric was to be let out over the land, the dilemma in which the country was placed. If the Bill should pass there must be a despotism inflicted upon this country more serious, heavier, more irrational, because proceeding from more uninstructed tyrants, than we had ever known yet; if it should fail to pass there would be anarchy, which was in itself an aggravated despotism, since it meant that every man must be tyrant over himself, and as many more souls as he could subdue with his two fists. Upon which horn of this dilemma to be impaled let each noble lord decide for himself. For his own part (Lord Bendish), there had been a time when he had desired to see the Bill rejected, and had found himself, however unaccountably, on the side of the noble Duke, with whom, it seemed, the final arbitrament was allowed on all hands to rest. He would not now stay to enquire into cause or consequence of this enlargement of constitutional precedent. For the moment he would pass it without further question. He believed that he should still have the honour of following his Grace, even though rumour credited him with milder counsels. If the noble Duke walked out of this House it would be his privilege, on such an occasion, to walk behind him. He could not bring himself to vote for a measure which proposed to confer legislative powers upon ignorant and prejudiced masses of men; still less could he join in an act which would let loose

lawlessness and clamour broadcast over the land. If these were his Grace's feelings in the matter, they were his own also.

"My lords," he concluded, "I will take no part with despots of any sort, nor however firmly rooted in the land; and I will do nothing whatever to foster anarchy. Common sense dictates to me the first abstention, common honesty the other. Let a man sow what he has earned, and reap what he has sown. If my neighbour please, or have the power, to grow fat upon what is in no sense his, it matters little to me whom he robs, whether he justify his act by right of charter or right of sword. His robbery shall hurt him the more, for in the act of robbing me of my substance he robs himself of his own honour. It is bad to be without bread, but worse to die of a surfeit of bread, I believe. I will be no party to such things. If the noble Duke say *Content* to this Bill he is welcome to what will ensue; if he say *Not-content*, he must abide that issue as best he may. I take my stand, myself, upon the right of a plain man to say, A plague on both your Houses—and that, I take leave to predict before your Lordships, may be the ultimate utterance of the British people."

Bendish sat down, as he had stood up, in the midst of a sensible thrill. He had spoken in a tense silence; the hum of private conversation was heard all over the House immediately afterwards. The Duke made no sign of having heard him, but now when the general attention was shifted to the next speaker, and before it had wearied of him, he drew a paper from

his pocket, folded, and addressed it. By and by he beckoned to a messenger, and handed him the paper. In due course, too, the messenger approached Bendish and handed it over, saying, "From the Duke of Devizes, my lord." He then withdrew.

Bendish opened it with a beating heart. Could this possibly be the prelude to mighty adventure? He felt that every eye was upon him, and summoned every nerve in his body to his service. He played indifference well. There was no fumbling, no shaking sign. His eyebrows kept up—his eyelids kept scornfully down, without a tremor. But he knew the paper in a flash. His skin darkened—he never grew red. It was the cancelled preface to Poore's *Vision of Revolt*. He caught sight—though it was not marked—of the flaming paragraph: "I know not what the issue of Mr. Poore's *Vision* . . . may be. I abide by what I have written, and am prepared to defend it. My forefathers fought at Hastings, and fenced about with steel the land which was others' inheritance. . . . If it be my lot to side with those who break down the hedges, so be it. They have served their turn, and I for one have done with them. By so much the less as I am a tenant *in capite*, by so much the more I claim to be an honest man. . . . And so," he read on, "the whirligig of time brings his revenges."

Bendish sweated as he read. But his sweat ran cold when it came upon him with conviction that this was all the answer the Duke intended to make him. He fought with the certainty; ludicrously

enough, he found himself telling himself that the Duke was not malignant. He was a great man, magnanimous: he would not humiliate his junior. He sat on, obstinately, through the wearisomeness of the debate. He was sickened to the very soul of politics, could not believe in the reality of the nights when, at Rapallo, he and Poore had burned with Reform like brands, and when the smoke of Idealism, Political Justice, and the Rights of Man had whirled up, illumined with showers of sparks, into the concave of the sky. Yet these memories recurred. He could not but see Gervase's fire-hued face, and hear the chanting of his dithyrambs, as he strode up and down the loggia. And Georgiana too he saw, in her white gown, bending her head over her needlework. And he remembered the fury of his longing for her, and with hot anger her rejection of him and his homage. God of heaven, how all these people had injured him! And there was the Duke stooping to hound a young poet out of England!

The speech of the Duke of Devizes, made towards the end of this great debate, belongs to history, and not to me. I shall only say of it here that it was very general in terms, and, far from referring to Lord Bendish, did not hint at the name of any noble lord. The times were momentous, much more momentous than any noble lord; but Bendish really could hardly believe that a man could ignore him so completely. He could see the intention, in fact had foreseen it, but that it should succeed really passed belief. He was shocked to the soul. Nothing that

had ever happened to him—not Georgiana's sang-froid, not Gervase's cut with the whip—had humiliated him to this point. Humiliated? Ah, no—he was annihilated; he was as good as dead. And he was impotent: it was absurd even to be in a rage. He couldn't touch this arrogant chill-blooded bully, who could toss down a young man's bleeding heart and grind it under his heel. Before such atrocious cruelty as this the noblest under heaven must be still. Tears scalded his eyes as he left the House and walked unmarked or unrecognised into the dark. He pushed his way through the packed Palace-yard, through George Street, and into the Park. As he went on, he knew that he was beaten, and that he must leave England. He could never hold up his head here again while that tyrant lived to rule it with his whip and ramrod and intolerable silence. Here was a man with whom he could not measure himself. Your Poores he could shoot if they got in his way; your Hollands and such he could afford to despise. There were plenty ways of dealing with the likes of them. But this man despised him, Bendish, and didn't even trouble to show that he did. Nay—crowning injury!—he even forebore to show it. For Bendish knew that if he had thought it worth his while he could have used that cancelled preface with deadly effect. He had not cared to do it. He had not cared to pull him out of his ditch that he might shoot him. No. He had let him lie where he had rolled himself—lie there and starve and rot. Bendish knew that he was mortally

wounded. And even in the flash of cognition his mind went hunting—hunting madly, far and wide, for a haven.

What a cautious gambler, what a provident spend-thrift was Bendish! Even as he gripped his stricken breast, or cast up his dying eyes, he drew a small and tender hand within his own; he turned his gaze due north-west. There, through the violet dark of the May night, he descried the litten panes of a modest upper window, and above that could make out a humble gable over which a honeysuckle tossed its tendrils. Golder's Green, seen from the portals of the House of Lords—so small, so tender, so snug an abiding-place! Ah, there was a merciful God in heaven. The old fables had not lied. Domestic peace brooded under those gentle eaves; and within, perched like a nesting bird, sat love with sheltering wings!

In the morning early he would arise and return to his love. Not his first—no, not that—but his longest and calmest and truest, because most assured, passion. He would return and say unto her, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy beloved; yet take me, broken as I am, for I know that thou art mine. And she would hold out her faithful arms and shelter him, and heal his grievous wounds.

The best part of the night he sat at his window looking out to the north over the houses of Piccadilly. The roaring street, the torches, the blaring horns proclaimed Reform a thing well done. Surging

bands flocked down the great road towards Wake House. He heard the Duke's name, with curses before it and after. The Guards came jingling and glittering up the hill from the Palace to save the fallen hero's person. Bendish took no joy in knowing the hour of his enemy's adversity. He was beyond this world; he walked with Rose in an Italian garden where water was falling on moss, and cypresses waved their plummy tops across the stars. He had outsoared the shadow of our night. He would watch it out, see the white dawn steal up over the house-tops; and with the sun, with the sun—he would ride to his love.

CHAPTER XXVI

QUIETUS FROM OLD MR. HENIKER

THE sun was pretty high, broad-splashed upon the houses opposite; it was in fact ten of the clock when Mr. Heniker was announced. Bendish, booted for his romantic quest, and all agog for it, was put out. "Damn it, Mackintosh, I'm busy. I'm going out. Tell him that I won't see him."

"Beg pardon, my lord," says Mackintosh, "but Mr. Heniker's here." And so he was, beaming in the doorway, flushed like a Ribstone, bowing, smiling and rubbing his comfortable hands. This was old Mr. Heniker, of course, true to his promise of yesterday. He was resplendent. His blue coat had brass buttons; his hat was of white beaver; his trousers were of the lightest drab; his stock was of bird's-eye blue.

"Your lordship is for an early canter! I saw the horses and thought myself lucky to catch you. A sweet spring morning for the young adventurers. . . . *It ver et Venus*—hey, my lord? The old tag comes back to me."

"Yes, yes, Heniker," said his lordship shortly, "that's all very well, and devilish appropriate, I've no doubt—but the fact is, I'm in a hurry. Now what can I do for you this morning?"

The elderly gentleman grew serious. "I beg your lordship's pardon, but as you sent for my son Roger at midday yesterday, and he was not available—no, no, not available, you know, for excellent reasons—if your lordship will remember, I sent back word that I would call in myself——"

Bendish recollected. "Ah, yes, I sent for Roger—that's quite true. They told me he was busy."

Old Heniker, bursting with his news, broke out in chuckles and gasps. "Ha ha! They might well say so, my lord. Busy—oh dear, oh dear! A young man is only as busy as that once in a lifetime, my lord! And not many young professional men have an opportunity to make such a combination of business and pleasure as has fallen into the way of my son. He would have written to your lordship as a matter of course—to no man sooner, but that the time was so short as really to forbid it. But as things are, I must take upon myself to be the bearer of his extraordinary news——" But Bendish, who had been pacing the room, broke in.

"Yes, yes, Heniker. You shall tell me what you please about him, but not now. I've got an appointment out of town——"

"So have I, my lord, so have I!" cried the old gentleman in high delight.

"I daresay you have. You had better keep it——"

"Oh, I must indeed, my lord," Mr. Heniker said, preternaturally serious all of a sudden. "Oho! it would never do to miss that."

"Precisely," said Bendish. "We will neither of

us miss. Therefore, if you'll allow me—" He took up his hat, gloves and whip as he spoke, and actually made for the door. Old Heniker was now concerned, and rather hurt.

"I must really point out to your lordship that, at some inconvenience, I have waited upon you, conceiving that your business with Roger was somewhat urgent. I must be allowed to say——"

Bendish reflected for a moment. "Yes—well, it was important, no doubt. I had intended to go abroad again—almost immediately——"

But now Mr. Heniker was not to be controlled. "Ha! and proposed to treat my son with the same munificent hospitality! My dear Lord, my dear Lord! God bless my soul, now, if that is not an extraordinary thing! Why, my lord, you'll hardly believe it, but at the moment you were thinking so generously of Roger, another noble gentleman was of the same mind. But his Grace came first—ha ha!—" He paused, took off his glasses, and wiped them with his bandana.

"Not only so," he went on, mastering his chuckles, as he blinked over his work at the glasses—"Not only so, my lord, but his Grace sends him out—as before—as before—to Italy. Not only so—but—as before—to Mrs. Poore. For it seems that Mr. Poore has come to London, and is likely to be very much engaged—ho ho! very particularly engaged, they whisper to me. So that's how it is that Master Roger couldn't keep your lordship's appointment—nor indeed keep any appointment with your lord-

ship for some time to come. But that's not the best of the joke neither."

It was more than enough for Bendish, but there was no denying Mr. Heniker now.

"It seems that the lady's in a delicate state of health—that was his Grace's own expression. 'A delicate state of health, Heniker,' he said to Roger. 'Now I suppose,' he went on—'pon my soul, it's rather good, as your lordship will see in a moment—'Now I suppose,' he says, 'you couldn't manage to take a lady out with you—you haven't a mother handy, hey? Or a sister? Or,' he says, 'do you happen to be a married man?' Ho ho! A married man." He now looked at his victim, with the explosion at the ignition point, hoping that they might burst together. But Bendish, who was quite in the dark, was calm with annoyance.

"Well, well, Heniker—do let's come to the point."

"But that *is* the point, my dear lord! 'No,' says Roger, humming and hawing, 'not precisely.'" A volley escaped him. "Ho! 'not precisely,' the young rascal! The Duke picks him up. 'What d'ye mean by that, Heniker?' he says; and then the murder was out. Roger tells him all about it. 'Not a married man yet, sir,' says he; 'but—well, I'm thinking of it.' Thinking of it, hey? That was a good one."

"Is he thinking of it?" Bendish said mildly. "I didn't know."

Old Heniker stared. "Is it possible? So good a friend as your lordship? But I must finish my story—it's too good to miss a word of it. The Duke has

him by the button. 'If you take my advice,' he says, 'you'll be off to Doctors' Commons after a special licence,' he says; 'and you'll go now. Then you'll go down and tackle the young lady, and she'll be Mrs. Heniker by noon to-morrow. Now, what do you say to that?' What indeed! What indeed! Quick work, hey? But your lordship knows his pace better than I do? What a man of men! Now Roger don't take long about it either. In a thirty seconds he looks at the Duke. 'I'll do it, sir,' he says; and the Duke says, 'I thought you would. Away with you.' Now, my lord, that's my news. I'm actually on my way to Golder's Green——"

Golder's Green! Bendish, as gray as wax, put up his hand. Old Heniker stopped and blinked at him.

"My lord——"

"Did you say Golder's Green?"

Old Heniker, recovered, was off again. "Golder's Green—exactly. A Miss Pierson, and a very charming young lady she is. Mrs. Heniker and I are delighted about her. Not very well to do—no, no. Nothing to talk of in that way. But a modest, sweet-spoken, good, pretty girl, living with her aunt, who is a clergyman's widow—and devoted to our boy as I could see in a flash of the eye."

There had been one trying moment in his recital when Bendish had felt like falling on his knees to this old babbler, and beseeching him by his own not to forsake him utterly. But that was past. His mind was now empty. Meantime his assassin was hard at his fell work.

"Now it would be a happy surprise for these two young people if I could persuade your lordship—hey? Really, it would be an act of great condescension—to grace the wedding, and throw the white slipper! They start immediately, you must know, in the Duke's own travelling carriage—for Florence. Now, my lord, if you would be so benevolent——"

I think he would have gone if he could—to have stared Rose into stone, to have had Roger by the windpipe—yes, he would have gone but for one thing. It was Mr. Heniker who saved Golder's Green from a fracas. Trapped, cornered, deserted as he was, Bendish could not let this blabbing old fool into his secret. On the contrary, he showed him his stateliest and most urbane.

"I'm really very sorry, Heniker. This news of yours is sudden. I wasn't at all prepared for it. And I fear that my appointment won't stand over. Be sure that I wish Roger very well—all that—more than—he deserves. I daresay it will turn out excellently. He shall hear from me—of course. That's of course. We are old friends—at least I had taught myself to believe it. But it's a queer world. I must take your word for the lady. A Miss Pierson, you say? And now, if you'll excuse me, Heniker——"

"Yes, yes, to be sure!" said the hearty man, and looked up at the clock. "God bless my soul! I haven't a moment." He held out his hand. "Good-morning to your lordship—and many thanks. Be sure that I shall give your kind messages to my boy

and girl—as indeed I may call her. Pray, pray don't disturb yourself, my lord.” He bowed and bustled himself out. Bendish was alone indeed.

He stood trembling for a few moments. He heard the sudden burst of music. The Guards' Band was at the Palace—the heartless world was still twirling and grinning round him. His trembling grew upon him. His hand mechanically felt the knob of a drawer in his writing table, pulled the drawer open, and closed about the silver-handled pistol which always lay there. In the act he looked up, and in the mirror opposite had a sight of his own shocked and wounded face. That sobered him. He flicked his hand out of the drawer as if some one had caught him unawares, and slammed it to. Mackintosh entered the room.

“I beg pardon, my lord, but the horses——”

Lord Bendish lifted his head, and looked at him.

“I shan't want the horses. I'm not riding.”

“Very good, my lord.” But the man remained in the room. “I beg pardon, my lord——”

“Well, Mackintosh, what is it?”

“I was about to say, my lord, that if I could be spared, I should be glad of a hour or two this forenoon. Mr. Heniker, my lord—Mr. Roger, I should say—is about to be married to that Miss Pierson; and he have been good enough to say that he should be glad of my presence. So I thought . . .”

Bendish broke down. Mackintosh was alarmed. “My lord—oh, my lord——” The young man

wrenched himself about, faced the window, and steadied himself by leaning upon the sill.

"Look here, Mackintosh . . . I shall be obliged if you'll stay here for a little. . . . The fact is, I'm not at all well. If you could make it convenient . . . I should be grateful. . . ."

"Very good, my lord," said Mackintosh, and remained, quiet but hovering, in the room.

It had really come to that.

On a farmhouse parlour window, one summer afternoon, I was witness of a little paraphrase of our world's doings, done by microcosmic actors. One dusty pane of it was the stage of observation; but no doubt the others would have furnished as many more. In a corner some maggot or other, metamorphosis of a moth, had built herself a tent of silvery floss in which to spend the days of her separation; across another a spider had cast her filmy triangles, and even now was cording a midge into a bale with invisible threads. A humble-bee drowsily climbed the heights by means of the leading; in mid-field two house-flies made love, or paused between the orgasms to clean their legs. A ladybird rested from her flight, a little bubble of dry blood; a woodlouse coursed the lower slopes seeking dirt to add unto dirt. All was as peaceful as a Claude landscape, where happy toil and love and rest after labour merge and interchange in the mellow haze.

Then, as I looked and considered, there was a violent shock of commotion. A bluebottle fly

hustled into this busy little world with a bang, and in a moment all was upset. For he parted the lovers and scared them into space, and woke up the ladybird, and flacked the woodlouse into a pill. His bumming and guzzling stirred the bee to dangerous passion; between them they rocked the maggot's kraal out of position—it fell, and she with it, and became so much refuse. The field was open to their mad encounterings, except for the spider's gin; and into thatth finally they fell tumbling and bombinating, to wreck its intricate geometry, drive the contriver into hiding, and envelop themselves inextricably. Tied and bound in impalpable chains they fell, the instigator and the victim together; quivering, upon their backs they lay, out of reach and out of reckoning by the world in which they had wrought heedless havoc. That swept world lay hushed and bare as a ploughland in the winter cold.

The little drama speaks for itself; but to return for a moment to George, Lord Bendish. *Alieni profusus, sui appetens*. I may vary Sallust to account for this young man. He had, for the moment, emptied his own little world; but many things remain to be said of him, for he was inveterate at spending, and there are as many worlds precisely as there are men and women. For the moment he lay upon his back, quivering advances to Mackintosh to comfort him; but you may feel sure that he will be up and out again before long for fresh worlds in which to riot. Of him indeed I have many things to report, but not now. He left England almost

immediately after the events above chronicled, and thereafter his affairs mingle with European affairs. But they were talking of him at the breakfast table at Holland House a week or so after his departure, and Sam Rogers said a good thing of him in his rasping voice. Somebody had commented upon his gift of rhetorical penmanship and thought him a political force turned off the track. Reform, surely, would have been speedier if he had held his course. Whereupon old Rogers croaked his epigram. "Bendish!" he said; "Reform! Bah, my dear sir! Bendish used Reform as a fork to scratch his back with."

THE END

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